Guntur District
1788–1848
A History of Local Influence and Central Authority in South India

ROBERT ERIC
FRYKENBERG

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Between 1788 and 1848, silent combinations of local groups in Guntur District increased their power at the expense of the State and British officers lost control of their Indian subordinates. Maratha Brahmans, acting in the name of Government, freed themselves from supervision; just below them moved a restive village leadership, wielding remarkably durable and tenacious kinds of influence. From manuscript sources, Mr. Frykenberg examines the encounters between Lilliputian villages —countless threads of effort organized into effective conspiracies against central control—and the growing leviathan of British rule. He traces elements of social structure, land control, and political functions within a Telugu area, and analyzes traditional institutions and processes of power in South India.

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GUNTUR DISTRICT: 1788–1848

A HISTORY OF LOCAL INFLUENCE AND CENTRAL AUTHORITY IN SOUTH INDIA

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East View of Bellumconda: September 6th 93.

GUNTUR DISTRICT
1788-1848

A History of Local Influence and Central Authority in South India

BY

ROBERT ERIC FRYKENBERG

CLARENDON PRESS · OXFORD
1965

Oxford University Press, Amen House, London E.C.4

GLASGOW NEW YORK TORONTO MELBOURNE WELLINGTON
BOMBAY CALCUTTA MADRAS KARACHI LAHORE DACCA
CAPE TOWN SALISBURY NAIROBI IBADAN
KUALA LUMPUR HONG KONG

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PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN AT
THE UNIVERSITY PRESS
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PREFACE

THIS is a study of the collision between localizing and centralizing forces within one unit of the Madras Presidency when it was under the rule of the British East India Company. It is an examination of the zone in which the delegates of British power came into direct contact with the *élite* among the leading communities of a district. The reasons why a study of this kind was pursued and why Guntur District was selected for investigation are, of course, partly accidental and partly deliberate. I owe much to many people for the development of what has gone into the pages of this book. Grateful acknowledgement and thanks must be expressed to each person who gave assistance. That such thanks are due will become evident from the following explanations.

The idea that I could draw upon my knowledge and experience as a boy reared in Telugu country was first planted at the University of California by Professor Richard L. Park (now Dean of Social Sciences at the University of Pittsburg). He pointed out an apparent polarity of preoccupations by students of India in which, on the one side, there seemed to be a tendency for historians and political scientists to concentrate upon a wide and often an All-India frame of reference and, on the other side, a tendency for anthropologists and sociologists to focus attention upon the minutiae of individual villages. It occurred to me that I might make a profitable historical enquiry into the middle plane. Between these macroscopic and microscopic approaches there appeared to be an uncharted territory that might prove a rich field for research. It also appeared to me at the time that much Indian history has been written from above, from the viewpoint of the rulers. Only such affairs as engaged the attention of the supreme rulers loomed large. The idea of writing a history from below, with the hope that other studies in local history might follow, some day giving rise to a more comprehensive (social and economic) history of India by an inductive process, was encouraged by Professor Robert I. Crane (Duke University).

But it was under the inspiration and guidance of Dr. Percival Spear (Cambridge University) and with the aid of a Research

Fellowship awarded by officers of the Rockefeller Foundation, notably Mr. Chadbourne Gilpatric, that I was able to break ground. After preliminary research in California, I began working at the India Office Library (London). The very generous help of Mr. S. C. Sutton and his staff enabled me to make a series of enquiries into the affairs of Madras districts during the early nineteenth century. Those remarkable sources of information, the district manuals, showed potential strikes of material. Perhaps because as a boy I spent months in each year travelling among the villages and camping on the plains of Guntur (and Nalgonda), and perhaps because the best samples pointed to this district, a more than usual curiosity about Guntur was awakened in me. *The Manual of Kistna District* revealed a bitter struggle among Guntur's leaders and uncovered a scandal. By following this seam, I struck a gold-mine of original sources which has served as the basis for this study.

My first strike was the report by Walter Elliot, 840 pages in all, on the troubles of Guntur. Shortly after this, I discovered another report of almost equal length, by John Goldingham, on the social and economic condition of Guntur, to which long treatises were appended by various local leaders. The papers of the 13th Lord Elphinstone proved to contain correspondence with many leading and lesser figures in Madras, Calcutta, and London, the most notable of which were the semi-monthly letters from Walter and Maria Elliot (1836–58). The Marquis of Tweeddale graciously permitted me to examine the papers of his grandfather (and put them on permanent loan in the India Office Library). The Goodwood Archives of the Duke of Richmond contained some especially revealing letters from the 8th Marquis of Tweeddale.

The core of this book, however, rests upon an examination of manuscript materials in the Guntur District Records, a hitherto untapped source stretching from 1788 to 1859. But for the patience and help of Mr. M. Natesan, Mr. Natarajan, and the staff at the Madras Record Office, it would have been impossible for me to microfilm all the materials needed.

I am greatly indebted to various members of the Indian Administrative Service for their help. The resources of the Central Record Office (now the Andhra State Archives) in Hyderabad were made available by its Director, Mr. V. K. Bawa. Mr. K. M. Unnithan, First Member of the Board of Revenue, offered encouragement and advice, as also did Mr. N. Ramesan, Mr. M. R.

Pai, Mr. C. K. Murthy, and many others. Mr. Purushotum Pai, Chief Secretary to the Government, graciously smoothed the way for my working in district and taluk record offices. The Collector of Guntur (in 1959), Mr. M. A. Haleem, and his Personal Assistant, Mr. P. Subbiah, together with the Huzur Sheristadar, the Head Clerk, and the Tahsildars went out of their way to be helpful, even though preoccupied with their normal duties.

It has been possible to draw together for the purpose of this study, therefore, manuscript and printed materials, a substantial portion of which have never been used before. Perhaps of equal importance for the future has been my discovery of hitherto untouched resources for historical research, offering opportunities for others to contribute to our knowledge of local history in south India.

Dr. Kenneth A. Ballhatchet (now at Oxford University) supervised my research and the writing of this study as a dissertation for a doctorate at the University of London. I am most grateful to him for the many hours of careful attention he gave, for his useful criticisms and advice, and for the unrestrained development of thought which he encouraged. I am also indebted to various other members of the School of Oriental and African Studies. To the Committee on Southern Asia at the University of Chicago, who made it possible for me to devote a year to the broadening of my perspective and the kind of reflection needed for the revision and preparation of my study for publication, and to Professors Stephen N. Hay, Surajit Sinha, and Milton Singer, who made many useful suggestions, I am much obliged. The map drawings were graciously prepared by Mr. David Woodward, Mr. Doug. Nolte, and Mrs. Jeanne Liu of the University of Wisconsin Cartographic Laboratory, under supervision of Professor Randall D. Sale. Other persons who read various chapters or made valuable suggestions were: Professor K. A. Nilakantha Sastri (University of Madras), Professor Bisheshwar Prasad (University of Delhi), Dr. S. P. Sen (University of Calcutta), Dr. A. T. Fishman (Andhra Christian College, now retired), Nyapati Madhava Rau (former Diwan of Mysore), Professor Richard Park, Professor R. I. Crane, and Dr. Percival Spear. Finally, to Carol, my wife, whose steadfastness and faithful assistance has been invaluable, my thanks are due most of all.

The University of Wisconsin R. E. F.

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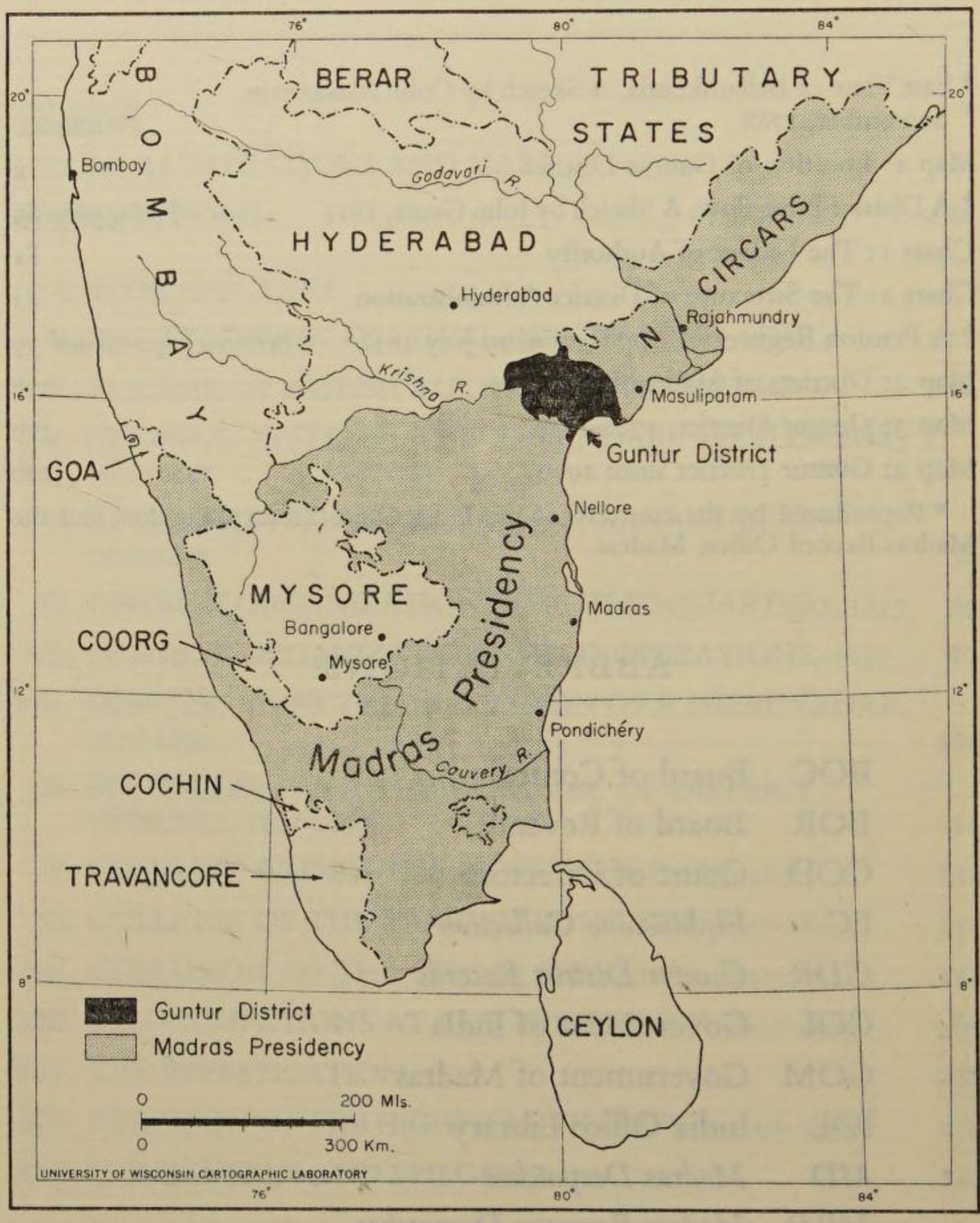
* Reproduced by the courtesy of the India Office Library, London, and the Madras Record Office, Madras.

ABBREVIATIONS[1]

BOC	Board of Control
BOR	Board of Revenue
COD	Court of Directors
EC	*Elphinstone Collection*
GDR	*Guntur District Records*
GOI	Government of India
GOM	Government of Madras
IOL	India Office Library
MD	*Madras Despatches*
MRD	*Madras Revenue Despatches*
MRL	*Madras Revenue Letters*
MRO	Madras Record Office
MRP	*Madras Revenue Proceedings and Consultations*
TC	*Tweeddale Collection*

[1] To facilitate the reading of footnotes.



Map 1. Location of Guntur District.

I

INTRODUCTION

GUNTUR District has a territory larger than Northern Ireland but smaller than Wales. It covers an area of 5,795 square miles. Lying on the south bank of the Krishna river, which disgorges from a corridor in the Palnad Hills and empties into the Bay of Bengal in a broad sweeping curve, the district is largely a flat, deltaic plain. This plain spreads westward from the ocean, rises gradually into broken country, and breaks upon the rough, jungled hills of the Palnad. Sea sand gives way to black 'cotton soil' and then to red gravel and clay. Out of the plain, rocky hills protrude abruptly, sometimes looking like great boulders dropped into a bed of wet mud. The larger of these are surrounded by crumbling fortifications and the smaller are crowned by little white shrines. The largest is Kondavidu, a long stone ridge dominating the centre of the plain. On clear days Vinukonda and Bellamkonda can be dimly discerned some distance off each flank of this ridge, west and north. The ruins of this once formidable triangle of fortresses stare blindly out over shimmering waves of heat rising from the plain below.

Guntur is a rich, surplus district. Its plain is a luxurious carpet of green the year round. Palm-fringed squares of sugar-cane, rice, and other staple crops, are laced together by irrigation canals. Tobacco fields bring foreign exchange from Britain and America. Arterial canals carry cargo vessels parallel to the coast. The Grand Trunk highway is fed by metalled roads from the interior. Main-line railways, joined by subsidiary lines at Bezwada, connect the district with the leading industrial, commercial, and population centres of India. Guntur has several colleges, including a medical college, and some large hospitals. Completion of the Nagarjuna-sagar Project (for hydro-electric power) promises to make Guntur into an industrial centre as well.[1]

[1] *Statistical Atlas of The Guntur District: 1360 Fasli (1950–1951)* (Hyderabad: Andhra Pradesh). *Statistical Abstract of Andhra Pradesh* (Hyderabad, 1958).

The old district of Company times was nothing like this. The land was parched and its people destitute. The canals of Chola days had long been choked or forgotten; and tanks were often dry. Famine and flood intermittently troubled the country, with plague and cholera in their wake. As if this were not enough, occasional cyclones, tidal-waves, and scourges of locusts would bring further devastation. Even in better days, the people of the district numbered less than one-seventh of today's population (1847: 415,599 against 1961: 3,009,997).

These people were settled in over a thousand villages of varying size, character, and status. Salt, fish, and maritime villages gave place to larger agricultural villages or small manufacturing towns with their satellite hamlets, clusters of habitation which depended upon weaving, overland trade, garden or fruit crops, pilgrimage (and pious learning), or government service for their prosperity. These closely contiguous villages of the plains gave way in turn to more scattered upland villages with their flocks and fields and mines.

What is generally known as the great Guntur Famine occurred in 1833. This event, together with the epidemics and usurpations which followed, cast a shadow over the land and its people which did not lift for two decades. How many people actually died and how many fled is debatable. Nevertheless, between 1832 and 1835 the population of the district decreased by nearly one-half, and more than two-thirds of the livestock were lost.[1] A stark picture came from one witness:

> The famine extends over a great part of the Madras Presidency. Europeans have subscribed liberally to feed as many of the poor wretches as possible and by this means ten times that number are still famishing and hundreds die daily, literally of starvation . . . and although a strong body of police are constantly employed in collecting the dead . . . numbers of bodies are left to be devoured by dogs and vultures.[2]

Scorching wind and burning heat accompanied this terrible drought; and this was followed by plague and cholera. 'A man in perfect health was hardly to be found anywhere.'[3]

[1] BOR to Collector, 11 June 1835, para. 4, *GDR* (vol. 3967–B, pp. 303–23).

[2] Col. Walter Campbell, *My Indian Journal* (Edinburgh, 1964), p. 424. Gordon Mackenzie, *Manual of the Kistna District* (Madras. 1883), p. 113.

[3] Bruce to BOR, para. 2, 5 August 1836, *GDR* (5394: 226–42); population data in para. 9.

This 'unparalleled distress' caused much concern in Madras.[1] Large sums of money were granted in remissions and in outright relief. Grain was imported. Medical help was increased. Efforts were made to halt the general exodus of people from the district. It was realized that without people the land could not recover. Work (*maramat*) on irrigation canals and tanks, roads, bridges, and other public works was provided. Records for these years are filled with Relief Reports and Relief Sanctions.[2]

Recovery from the famine was slow. But other deeper and more fundamental problems troubled the land. Guntur District in the midst of a gradual but painful transition from the traditional to the modern world, partially suffering the burdens of both and fully enjoying the benefits of neither. The declining old order showed many signs of paralysis, stagnation, and decay. The rising new age would not reach Guntur in strength for another twenty years. Changes were occurring, changes which were dislocating occupational groups, disturbing the structure of society, and disrupting relationships between its elements.

Before British rule roughly 10,000 provincial soldiers had been stationed in Guntur and another 10,000 local levies (*sibbandi*) had been maintained by the Zamindars. Military supplies had been requisitioned locally as much as possible. In the face of the uncertainties of the age, officers and enlisted men had spent money freely, purchasing the goods and patronizing the services of local artisans, tradesmen, shopkeepers, merchants, and entertainers. Zamindars had kept up steady demands for luxury items, such as jewelry from Ceylon and Burma, shawls from Kashmir, horses from Arabia, camels from Kabul, elephants from Mysore, gold thread from Benares, velvets and brocades from Gujerat, and such things as watches and clocks, glassware, and arms from Europe. Local looms had produced for export large quantities of chintz, calico, and muslin. Because it was risky and uncertain, overland transport had been a profitable business. Armenian, Sikh, Banya (e.g. Komarti, Chetty, &c.), Muslim and European bankers had reaped exorbitantly from loans advanced to

[1] Jamabandi *Report* for Fasli 1242, para. 3, October 1833; BOR *Proceedings* of 11 June 1835, para. 2; *Consultations*, 24 July 1835; *GDR* (3989 and 3976–B: 217, 459).

[2] *GDR* (3974: 2–23), *GDR* (3976: 123–6, 183), and *GDR* (3978: 749–56).

finance the wild schemes and reckless adventures of Zamindars and Nawabs.[1]

By 1837 much of this was changed. Small numbers of sepoys lived relatively quiet and well-ordered lives in garrison cantonments. Secure in their salaries and pensions, they tended to save some of their monthly seven rupees. Those Muslims, Rajus, Telegas, Kammas, and Reddis who were unable to stay in the army or police—and there were many—strove to make a living in commerce or agriculture, mostly agriculture. Zamindari decay and ruin had brought blight on financial speculators, so that a much larger, less affluent, and hence more cautious, banking and trading community competed for slimmer rewards.[2] Coming years would see the elimination of another anachronistic institution, the overland customs-station (*chauki*) which was located at ten to fifteen-mile intervals along the roads. In addition to the petty officials and bureaucracies that ran each of these stations, those economic groups connected with hostelry and transportation services and industries would simply be added to the growing series of occupational communities to suffer dislocation. Large amounts of cloth were still in demand within the subcontinent; but scarcely any now left Masulipatam for overseas markets.[3] European manufactures had yet to invade Guntur markets; but their introduction elsewhere was crippling local industry. Local exports still greatly exceeded imports; but there was a growing taste for outside products and a declining demand for cloth from looms in Rajapet, Vetapalem, Mangalagiri, and other towns of the district. Instead of utilizing the capital gains which accrued from this favourable balance of trade so as to create new enterprise and productivity, capital gains and profits were being brought into the district in the form of gold and silver bullion.[4] Traditional banking facilities, such as the drawing of *hundis* (bills of exchange) on local *saukars* (money-lenders), were disappearing owing to a lack of sound credit. While European financial interests (e.g. agency houses) scarcely reached into the district, the services

[1] Memorandum by S. V. K. Rao on 'Social and Economic Conditions in Guntur Zillah' (Appendix A, *Goldingham Report*, 13 December 1839), *MRP* (range 280, vol. 70, p. 2590), No. 30 of 16 April 1841.

[2] ibid. pp. 2615 ff.; see also Appendixes D and F.

[3] ibid. paras. 41–49. Mackenzie, op. cit. p. 119 shows that cloth to the Persian Gulf alone had fallen from 50 lakhs to less than one-half lakh value per year.

[4] op. cit. *Goldingham Report*, paras. 49–50, *MRP* (280: 7: 2495).

afforded by the Accountant-General were only just beginning to be used by the more modern, affluent, but minute, elements of the native population.[1] (There were as yet no other banking facilities in Guntur.)

Largely because Guntur was in a period of transition, an assessment of prosperity and living-standards is rather difficult. But some facts which have been gleaned serve as indicators and give us some idea of levels of consumption. The high food prices of troubled, pre-British times had fallen during a long period of peace, which with the exception of the Pindari raid of 1817 had prevailed since 1788. Prices now were only occasionally disturbed by famine or flood.[2] Rice, which had not been enjoyed 'even by the higher servants of the Zamindars', was now eaten by many, notably by village leaders, skilled workers, and professional people, 'even the lowest orders' having rice for festive occasions.[3] Tiled houses, which formerly had been very rare, were becoming quite common, especially in towns and larger villages. Four and five times as much of such luxuries as betel nut, cummin seed, tamarind, dry coconut, sugar, betel leaf, tobacco, and opium were being consumed. Some poorer ryots were even beginning to have their own stock and to wear better clothes.[4] Thus it would appear that the population as a whole was more prosperous than it had been before the turn of the nineteenth century. But this apparently attractive picture needs to be qualified, first, by a closer look at the various levels of subsistence in the social order, and second, by an understanding of those elements of administrative stagnation and decay which were corrosively eating at the very vitals of society and which are one of the main subjects of this book.

Because natural catastrophes had prevented an increase in population and because the poorest people had borne the brunt of these disasters, there was a shortage of common labour in Guntur District, a condition which tended, at least temporarily, to ameliorate the chronic poverty of these classes. Yet, this circumstance left little room for the poor to improve his lot. He was

[1] *Goldingham Report*, paras. 119–23.
[2] ibid. paras. 57–63, *MRP* (280: 7: 2503–9).
[3] op. cit. para. 102. *Note:* There is a common saying today in the delta area that the East India Company gave the poor man rice, a food which he had not enjoyed before. Although tradition attributes this rice to the great anicut, both Oakes and Whish (1811–31) encouraged rice cultivation.
[4] ibid. paras. 103, 104 and 105.

'kept down from attaining that position of independence which is desirable' by the *élite* of each village.[1] As will be pointed out, Government advances for seed and implements (*takavi*) to marginal cultivators tended usually to evaporate before reaching their intended recipients.[2] Loans from the village *saukar* (moneylender), who was commonly 'a Ryot from their own village', held poor people in an economic thraldom next to slavery.[3] In return for subsistence, seed, and implements, the bondsman would give all of his produce to his village lord (or *saukar*). If wise, his village lord not only kept his underlings from starvation but he also saw to their special ceremonial or psychological needs (weddings, pujas, &c.).[4] But even if a would-be small farmer escaped the net of the socio-economic system as it was drawn tight by the hands of the village leaders, he found that plots of zamindari land were either inalienable or unsaleable owing to debt, that separate smallholdings (*seri* lands) along the riverbank were too expensive and too scarce, and that *inams* of various kinds were so tenaciously held and so eagerly sought after that he had next to no chance of getting some land.[5] Indeed, the very climate of values, in which land was equated with wealth and status, discouraged social mobility or acquisitive enterprise. Finally, reasonable credit on attractive terms was prohibitively hazardous and expensive, being blocked by endless red-tape, inevitable litigation, and all sorts of laws, forms, stamp-papers, and needless delays.[6]

To some degree reflecting the lowest occupational levels of society, there were roughly four methods of paying for common labour. Some workers received three to five *tumus* (twentieths) out of each *khandi* (measuring 500 lb.) of grain they grew, plus fees on the threshing floor. Some received daily portions of boiled or raw *chollam* (a local grain), and either 8 rupees in coin or else 4 rupees, two loin cloths, an upper cloth, a turban, and a pair of sandals each year. (Annual payments coincided with the Telugu New Year's Day.) Some worked by the day, receiving what their skill and strength would allow in relation to the market price of food. Weeding and clearing paid less than ploughing, sowing, and

[1] op. cit. *Goldingham Report*, para. 51.

[2] A fuller treatment of *takavi* is to be found in the chapter describing the taluk or field establishment, pp. 86–100.

[3] ibid. para. 108. A. S. Raju, *Economic Conditions in the Madras Presidency: 1800–1850* (Madras, 1941), pp. 142–5.

[4] ibid.

[5] ibid. para. 100.

[6] op. cit. *Goldingham Report*, para. 106.

reaping. A man was worth between 1·2 and 2, a woman between 1 and 1·5, *manchas* of raw grain for working in the fields from dawn to dusk. (A *mancha* was an eighth of a *tumu*, or about 3 lb.) Finally, non-agricultural builders-of-walls (mud or brick), makers-of-salt, haulers-of-cargo, cutters-of-wood, and drawers-of-water, to name just a few labouring occupations, earned anything from 1·5 to 2·5 *manchas* of raw *chollam* for a day's work.[1]

At the opposite end of the ladder from the lowly workers, on the other hand, were the British rulers and their Indian servants. This Anglo-Indian political *élite* in Guntur not only manifested the power of the State within the district, coming into contact with local leaders, but it also represented the wider authority of the State over South India, together with elements of more extensive political communities which contributed to that authority.

Europeans were greatly outnumbered by their Indian subordinates. Not counting village leaders, the over-all ratio of Britons to Indians serving the Madras Government during the first half of the nineteenth century was never less than 1 to 4·4. If the military personnel are not counted, the ratio appears to have been more like 1 to 100. Again, if only civil servants are considered, the ratio would widen to one European and between 170 and 190 Indians. The disparity would increase even further in the *mufassal*, particularly in the 'settled' districts, since zamindari required a much smaller government establishment; moreover, proportionately more Europeans always worked at the Presidency. In 1830 the Guntur administration contained three Europeans and 1,368 Indians. Normally, however, there were between four and six British officers in Guntur.[2]

[1] *Goldingham Report*, paras. 94–95, pp. 2544–9. *Note:* Above these levels of labour were the skilled occupational castes—workers in clay, wood, stone, metals, precious metals, leather, and various cloths (both weaving and sewing), who earned what their skills would bring in the market (if they were not bound in servitude); and above these castes came the personal, professional, martial, and governmental services. No appreciable changes in wages for common or skilled labour seem to have occurred in the forty years prior to 1837.

[2] Calculations presented here are based on figures from: (1) House of Commons *Return on Total Europeans and Natives Employed in Madras Presidency: 1800–1851; Returns of All Civil Offices and Establishments for Madras, 1st May, 1831*, Parliamentary Papers, I.C.S. Collection 366 (London, 1853). (2) Henry Ricketts, *Report on Revision of Civil Salaries and Establishments*, Part I (Calcutta, 1858), p. 321.

Communal stratification within the local administration somewhat offset this extreme disparity between Indians and Britons. Guntur had anything but a homogeneous society and its administrative hierarchy was dominated at different levels by different caste groups, with Desasthas at the top and other Brahmans, Muslims, and high castes ranged below them, outcaste groups being at the very bottom of the ladder. Respectable Indians remained relatively isolated within their caste barriers. The few dominating the top levels cultivated their English and developed contacts among their British superiors. Maratha Brahmans were in some respects as removed from lower levels as their British masters.

But for European residents of Guntur during Company times, for British officers and their families, the district was an especially difficult place to live. Indeed, it was considered a hardship station. One has but to see the names of the men and women and particularly of the small children in the graveyards to realize how true this was. Officers so shunned going to Guntur, that, as we shall see, a want of European agency posed a serious threat to British control of the district; moreover, in recognition of this fact, after 1848 and for many years thereafter, a special annual compensation allowance of Rs. 2,000 was given to any Collector who served there.

In 1845 a Commissioner sent from Madras to investigate the condition of the Guntur District reported: 'The Circar, instead of having improved during the long period it has been subject to the peaceful sway of the British Government, is actually in a worse state now than it was when it was ceded by the Nizam upwards of fifty years ago.'[1] The reasons for this sad state of affairs and the causes behind the deplorable conditions, which provoked such a melancholy disclosure, are the concern of this study.

But an historical study such as this necessarily involves more than an analysis of the formal structure and functions of one

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Note: The average number of military personnel ranged between 10,000 and 14,000 Europeans to between 15,000 and 25,000 Indians. Indian civilians numbered about 40,000 in 1838 and roughly 35,000 in 1858. Covenanted Civil Servants usually numbered between 200 and 250.

[1] Walter Elliott [*Elliot Report*] to Government of Madras, para. 66, 17 April 1846, *MRP* (280: 20: 7562), No. 39 of 6 December 1847.

local administration. It calls for a deep probing into social relationships. It requires a description of how local leadership was able to meet the leviathan of English power and how policies essential for the growth of strong government could be balanced against concessions to local aspiration. It discovers the elements of originality or continuity, of flexibility or rigidity, and of stability or instability within the executive arm of the State. It investigates and scrutinizes the way in which State power was exercised, the manner in which British rule accommodated itself to the peculiarities of a distinct area and people, the capability of the East India Company and its servants in resolving problems or meeting needs and, finally, the importance of the District Collector in carrying out policy and upholding State authority.

Administration, the performance of executive duties for an institution, here must be seen as the managing or directing activity of the State in the exercise of its power; specifically, the conduct of governing or ruling Guntur District. Two elements of this process are of particular concern.

First, that invisible exercise of power; that act of producing an effect without apparent force or direct authority; that inner pressure arising from social class (or caste), moral character, wealth, or other imponderables and intangibles which weigh in the minds of men—this is to be found within the meaning of a concept of central importance in our study, namely, *influence*. Influence combines ingredients necessary for leadership. We are interested in the local influences emanating from the leadership within Guntur District: the influence of village leaders, aristocratic leaders of the old order, newer district officers, upholders of tradition as well as advocates of change. We want to examine the means by which these leaders exerted their influence, whether by petitions, intrigues, bribes, threats, religious sanctions, physical sanctions, or manipulation of components within administrative machinery.

Second, there is *policy*, a concept which does not always define itself, even when used carefully and consistently. Policy is a settled course of action, adopted *and* carried out. It is a process of governing, a procedure of management based on objectives and interests which are tangible, even though higher principles and intentions may exist in the minds of those who determine policy. It is a process of decision-making and implementation. In

proportion to the complexity of governmental behaviour or of individual and institutional behaviour, policy is the sum (the difference, or the quotient) of the various motivations. In this sense, even no policy is policy. It matters little how high or low are the purposes of the determining members of a governing organization, if the product of their behaviour is paralysis. For lack of policy, paradoxically enough, is still policy.

Revenue policy, of course, seeks the realization of revenue. Sound revenue policy aims to realize revenue in such a way that the resources for producing this revenue are preserved and developed. But in the Guntur Collectorate the revenue administration was also the executive and service (public welfare) arm of the Government. Therefore revenue policy included questions of general administration. The selection, promotion, discipline, removal, and management of personnel, as well as arrangements for the centralization of operations or the delegation of powers, were all matters bearing on aspects of revenue policy.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, two systems (or lines) of administrative policy were laid down by British authority. Under the first, the *zamindari* system, large blocks of governmental power based on legal rights of property-ownership were delegated to those who were thought to be the traditional aristocratic lords in Guntur District. When a cautious and conservative Court of Directors discovered that this course was proving a somewhat radical innovation for the Madras Presidency, they suspended its further introduction. Under the second, the *ryotwari* (*amani*) system, after careful observation and also as a result of the strong character and thinking of that remarkable observer, Sir Thomas Munro, another course of action was followed, by which most governing powers were centralized and retained by the State Government. Instead of trying to protect people from abuse at the hands of the State, the second system sought to protect people from oppressive local leaders and speculators by means of the State. The plan was adopted in London only after years of pushing and pulling; moreover, even then (in 1818) the Court of Directors were not without doubts.[1]

All through the period under study the same doubts and

[1] T. H. Beaglehole, 'Thomas Munro and the Development of Administrative Policy in Madras: 1792–1818' (Cambridge University, Ph.D. Thesis, 1960), pp. 10–21.

arguments, the same pushing and pulling, and the same conflicting purposes and motivations persisted. Because of conflict between the basic premises of these two systems of government, policies often became neutralized or erratic. In some respects, neither the Cornwallis system, applied to Madras as the Wellesley experiment, nor the Munro system was carried out completely. Both existed within the same district; and, as will be seen, each tended to cancel out the other. Resulting policy was sufficiently paralysed and contradictory to jeopardize British administration in Guntur.[1]

During the period under study the British grew from just *another* power in India to *the* power over India. The subcontinent then enjoyed almost two decades of comparative peace. But while the British were outwardly supreme, their power was silently challenged from within. The steady and monotonous throbbing of the engines of State administration lulled the senses and deadened the perceptions of even its more responsible British officials. Their undue preoccupation with the excitements of social life, intrigue, and ambition muffled the sounds of warning signals, and centres of control were not fully and vigilantly tended. Trouble was bound to crop up and this was most likely to occur in a remote and difficult district, especially one such as Guntur. Executive control over Guntur would not have faltered nor the condition of the district become so miserable had not central authority been weak and ineffectual in its actions and had not local forces drawn upon remarkable resources of strength.

[1] P. B. Smollett, *Civil Administration in Madras* (London, 1858), favoured the Zamindars; but J. Norton, *Letter to Lowe on the Condition and Requirements of Madras Presidency* (Madras, 1853), favoured a return to the 'pure' *ryotwari* system of Munro. Also see 'The Land Revenue of Madras' and 'Sir Thomas Munro and the Land Tax', *Calcutta Review*, vol. 17, pp. 282–339; and vol. 15, pp. 351–74.

II

THE TRADITION OF LOCAL INFLUENCE IN 1788

FROM translations of stone and copper inscriptions, and from palm-leaf writings, we are able to obtain some idea of the way in which the elite groups of Guntur District regarded themselves at the time the British régime began. It is certainly beyond the scope of this study to explore all the fragmentary sources which survive from pre-modern times. But an intensive and comprehensive study of those times is not required to show the nature and strength of traditions which were held by village leaders. The power of these traditions has a relevance quite distinct from their validity and, as such, has a bearing upon the arguments of this study.

The local histories of Guntur contain a wealth of information about prevailing institutions and leading social groups. The value of these histories is enhanced because they come from such important villages as Kondavidu, Chebrole, and Guntur (now Patta-Guntur). An occasional intrusion of what is obviously founded upon religious precept or folklore increases our knowledge of local leadership. There is a remarkable degree of agreement among these village chronicles, agreement which is confirmed in light of the events by which the British came to power and which compares favourably with James Grant's 'Political Survey of the Northern Circars' and other sources.

One tradition credits Mukanti, a Pallava king of Dharanikota whose name emerges from the mists of antiquity (without any date), with an attempt to reorganize the administration of his realm for the express purpose of 'preventing confusion in the transactions of revenue and justice',[1] a confusion which came

[1] *Elliot MSS*, 'On the Origin of Village Accountants', *Local History* I (IOL: Eur. MSS. F. 46), p. 93. The Elliot Collection was apparently found at various

from falsification of village records. Goldsmiths (Aravas) were blamed as the causes of the king's trouble. Brahmans were brought down from Benares to be the Village Accountants under a new organization of government.

Under the new system (similar to the present jajmani system in north India), villages remained semi-autonomous. Twelve kinds of officers were appointed for each village, paid by custom out of the goods and services of the village. The Headman (*Pedda Kapu*), the Accountant (*Karnam*), and the Treasurer (*Parikshaka*), were answerable to the King for their actions. Below them, in descending rank, were the priest, potter, washerman, carpenter, ironsmith, barber, waterman, watchman, and menial. Menial duties were divided between Mala and Madiga families. Disputes were meant to be handled by councils of arbitration within each family, caste, village or group of villages, as the occasion demanded.[1]

Because his skill in accounting and bookwork was exacting and because it was sacred and secret to his family, the *Karnam* or Accountant held a position which was both durable and influential. A village seldom held more than one Karnam family. This family would be related to Karnam families of the same sub-caste in other villages. Through family connections, a network of local influence could develop. Successively higher levels of authority in the hierarchical structure of regal power could be resisted, then corrupted and infiltrated, and finally permeated and undermined by a nepotistic combination of Karnams. Thus, even in very ancient times, effective central control depended upon the efficiency and co-operation of Karnams. But when central authority was undermined by secret combinations of Karnams, resort to extreme sanctions and violence failed to produce real solutions; for while subversive power in two or three villages might be crushed, the need for careful accounting remained. Moreover, the remaining villages with their Karnam families continued to exert their silent influence.

It is evident that Brahmans slowly but painfully displaced Aravas and Jains as Karnams. Among various Brahman groups, the Niyogis ultimately became predominant. According to one account, A Gajapati minister 'in the Condaveedoo Seema' was so

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times between 1788 and 1817, for there are marginal notes indicating when a particular chronicle was translated from Telugu into Marathi and from Marathi into English.

[1] *Elliot MSS*, pp. 93–97.

abused by Arava Karnams in the year 1144 (A.D.) that he established the legendary *Aruvelu Niyogilu* or 'Six Thousand Niyogis' as Karnams in the Telinga country, 'for as long as the sun and the moon endure'.[1] Successive waves of other groups, however, such groups as the Hoysalas, Kanakapillais, Lingayats, Patrulus, Badagals, and Nandavarikas (or Yagnavalkis), as well as the Linga Balijas, Gazulu Balijas and Kayasthas, come or were brought into the district in the train of succeeding political régimes.[2] But since these groups were small, they succeeded in retaining only isolated pockets of influence in widely scattered villages once they and their royal masters were superceded. It took the Niyogis at least 400 years to root out the Aravas and Jains, fend to off other competitive groups, and to permeate the local administration with members of their own caste.[3]

Villages survived forces and innovations of central authority. Institutions above the villages were seemingly much less durable. Struggles for village and district positions took place whenever a new régime sought to enforce its authority; but power at high levels was much more transient and its danger passed away. Perpetual strife, counter-marching armies, and rapid rising and falling of fortunes are said to have occurred as each king tried to spread the umbrella of his authority over the plains.[4]

A group of villages was gathered into a *samutu*. *Samutus* were grouped together into a *sima*. Kondavidu Sima was bounded by the *simas* of Bellamkonda, Vinukonda, and Nagarjunakonda. Farther away were the *simas* of Nellore, Kandukur, Addanka, Kondapalli, and Ellore. Each *sima* was under the charge of a

[1] *Elliot MSS.*, 'Translation of Dandakavile by Vadhamundi Kamaraz, Curnum of Peturu Village in Repalle Talook, Zillah Guntoor' *Local History*, I (IOL: Eur. MSS. F. 46), p. 106. *Note:* Many popular traditions still abound.

[2] ibid. 'On the Origin of Village accountants', *Local History*, I (IOL, Eur. MSS. F. 46), pp. 96–103; also, 'Historical Memoir of Chebrolu', *Local History* III (IOL: Eur. MSS. F. 48), pp. 91–104.

[3] This process is borne out in Gordon Mackenzie's *A Manual of the Kistna District* (Madras, 1883), pp. 15–38.

[4] Several local histories give this picture: *Elliot MSS.*, *Local History*, I (IOL: Eur. MSS. F. 46), pp. 93–106, 330–5; *Local History*, II (IOL: Eur. MSS. F. 47), pp. 62–71, also pp. 91–104, 240–1, and 515–78. Mackenzie, op. cit. pp. 1–50. For general works, see K. Gopalachari, *Early History of the Andhra Country* (Madras, University Press, 1941), pp. 73–90; G. C. Ganguly, *The Eastern Galukyas* (Benares, 1937); K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, *A History of South India* (Madras, 1955) and *The Colas* (Madras, 1955); and T. V. Mahalingham, *South Indian Polity* (Madras, 1955).

Samprati or *Stalla-Karnam* who was the counterpart of Karnam at a higher level.[1]

Guntur was ravaged by Muslim *jihads* before its rule by Hindus ended. After the Warangal king was carried off to Delhi, the Reddi kings of Kondavidu held an unsteady hand on the district for a century. The area continued to be the battleground between Golkonda, Vijayanagar, and Orissa for another two centuries. Vijayanagar was in nominal control after 1516. Control continued to see-saw back and forth until Golkonda took over the key fortresses in 1579. Yet, even though Islam seemed to be paramount, annual sallies across the river disputed its superiority.[2]

The ascendancy of Golkonda brought predictable changes in administrative personnel. Outsiders were brought in who were more closely attached to the interests of their Muslim masters. These outsiders were Desasthas, Maratha Brahmans of Madwa persuasion who had held positions in the Deccan, and Golkonda Vyaparis, to whom they were related. A number of Niyogis were put to the sword and others were removed from district positions. At subdivisional levels, where armed forces were needed to maintain order and enforce decisions, one martial caste was replaced by another. Velamavaru were severely treated and Kamma people were brought in to manage the *parganas* or *samutus*. Some names and circumstances may have changed; but villages were not much affected by the changes which went on above them.[3] Niyogi strength at the village level was not much disturbed.

Two officers were put in charge of the district, one a Muslim and the other a Desastha. As co-rulers whose respective functions were the sword and the pen, Murtija Khan and Khasa Raya Rao reorganized the administration. The 'Condavity Seema' was divided into fourteen subdivisions. These fourteen *parganas* included Vinukonda, Bellamkonda, Guntur, Tadiconda, Chebrolu,

[1] *Elliot MSS.*, 'Condavid Country, or Guntur', *Local History*, I (IOL: Eur. MSS. F. 46), pp. 103–5.

Note: Perhaps this image which Niyogis possessed may be contrasted with what was a fairly standard British view, expressed by Mackenzie: '. . . the Hindus changed very little . . . their customs are probably the same as they were five hundred or a thousand years ago . . . the same villages, the same cultivations, the same arts and industries', Mackenzie, op. cit. p. 11.

[2] Mackenzie, op. cit. pp. 20–38. K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, op. cit. pp. 271–87.

[3] *Elliot MSS.*, 'On the Origin of Village Accountants', *Local History*, I (IOL: Eur. MSS. F. 46), p. 101.

Prattipadu, Gurzala, Ponnuru, and other current names. The entire district was renamed the 'Murtazanagar Circar'. Twelve *Muta Saddis* or revenue officials were appointed and *Samutu Bandis* or regulations were issued to guide the administrations.[1]

A struggle for key administrative positions persisted throughout this period. There were those who were skilled with the pen and those who were skilled with the sword. At the lower levels, local Brahmans, chiefly Niyogis, tended to monopolize positions requiring clerical skills while local warrior castes such as Kammas, Velamas, Telagas, Kapus, and Rajus dominated military occupations. At the higher levels, this division was between Muslim soldiers and Desastha or Vyapari administrators. Competition for position or for power between castes possessing special skills, between penholders and sword-holders at each level, and between concentrations of power at different levels marked an arena of local controversy which was very complicated. Manoeuvres, shifts, and combinations within a local conflict usually occurred under the Muslim umbrella without notice or interference.

Thus, what we may call a caste system of selection, rooted in caste and nourished by nepotism, seems to have been characteristic. It would have been important for a Brahman group to gain the king's ear; for, by winning his confidence, the administrative hierarchy could gradually be filled with family and caste members. Yet unless villages were so managed that revenues remained regular, those holding the higher positions would ultimately lose the confidence of the ruler. If competition between caste groups were very hard, coalitions could be formed. It would be unwise for a state-wide Hindu coalition to indulge in overt bids for supreme authority. Rather, by taking lessons from the white ant, such a group might silently gain an inner control finding nourishment within the body of political organization without disturbing the crust or causing the umbrella of authority to collapse. It may be supposed that such a group could effectively slacken or tighten the reins of power, silently supporting or undermining the strength of the ruling prince. Only occasionally, if the umbrella of authority were too decrepit or if a caste elite were too strong, ambitious, or foolish, might there be danger of disintegration. Presumably,

[1] *Elliot MSS.*, 'Translations of Dandakavile at Condavid Village', *Local History*, I, by Vinnacotta Venkanah (ibid.), pp. 331 ff. The name may have been in honour of a general, p. 34 of Mackenzie, op. cit.

such a political system could have had a moderating influence upon an autocratic and often despotic rule; for by its very nature it would tend to limit the excesses both of central and of local power.

How such a system operated in Guntur, while not always clear, is still discernible. The Desastha, Khasa Raya Rao, apparently had a much stronger hold on the administration than his Muslim co-rulers. Local accounts give Muslims no credit for the fall of Kondavidu. One look at the steep hill fortress is enough to discredit any notion that heavy guns or elephants would have sufficed. The local story is that Raya Rao bribed the Governor 'with bags of brass pagodas'.[1] The influence of Raya Rao may also be seen in the fact that he remained while his Muslim co-rulers were often replaced.

Yet the hold of Golconda on Guntur was anything but firm. When Ali Khan Luri failed to persuade Raya Rao and his Desasthas to join him in a plot to detach the district from Golconda, his irregular forces were still able to gain enough local support to thwart central power. After Raya Rao's return to Golconda, further unrest followed. Vijayanagar forces entered the district. Revenue payments were withheld. Finally, 'Mohamad Padasha, sitting on a throne studded with precious stones at Golconda',[2] heard how the rebellious *Mannavars* (District Police Officers) were obstructing the roads to every village. Amin-ul-Mulk was sent to restore order; and this he did with great severity.[3]

Over the long run, centrifugal forces prevailed. Explaining this tendency James Grant wrote: 'In proportion to the complete sway of each new sovereignty, so the complete reduction of the tributary dependencies on the sea-coast became more and more an object of policy.'[4] The names of only five Murtazanagar Amins and their Desastha co-rulers are known. Thereafter, as Golkonda

[1] *Elliot MSS.*, 'Historical Memoir of Chabrole in the District of Chintapilly', *Local History*, III (IOL: Eur. MSS. F. 48), p. 100. This record was translated from Telugu into Marathi and then into English by a Brahman named Venkata Rao in 1817.

[2] *Elliot MSS.*, 'Translation of Dandakavile from Condavid Village', *Local History*, I (IOL: Eur. MSS. F. 46), p. 332.

[3] ibid. How tenaciously the older groups, the Niyogis, clung to power is noteworthy. See also *Elliot MSS.*, *Local History*, III (IOL: Eur. MSS. F. 48), pp. 91–102.

[4] James Grant, 'Political Survey of the Northern Circars', in *The Fifth Report, 1812*, III, edited by W. K. Firminger (Calcutta, 1918), p. 24.

was increasingly humiliated by Mughuls and Marathas, full sway over the district became impossible. Under the last king of Golkonda, administrative decentralization became complete. Tanisha's Niyogi ministers, Akanna and Madanna Pantulu, organized the district in such a way that the *haveli* villages and *amani* (government) *samutus* were governed 'by means of the inhabitants of the country'.[1] Niyogi influence in Golkonda was paralleled by even greater Niyogi strength in the villages where the 'Patel-Pattavarie' combined the office of headman and accountant in one person.[2] A mild but orderly rule predominantly by local Brahmans might smack of heresy to Sunni fanatics but it was the kind of government which inspired folklore and song.[3]

During the century of Hyderabad (and/or Mughul) rule, control over Guntur again was greatly limited by political realities. Guntur was only one district in one province within an enormous empire of twenty-two provinces. Aurangzeb was too busy fighting to consolidate his gains. His viceroy, Ghazi-ud-din, relied on the local Hindu officers for administration. After the six provinces of the Deccan Subah came under the umbrella of Asaf Jah in 1724, only ceremony tied Hyderabad to the House of Timur.

Muslim rulers made few changes in the existing system of local government. There were altogether too few Muslims in south India to do more than hold top posts and provide garrisons for the areas which they wished to control. During the sixty-five years from 1687 to 1752 forty-two Muslim officers ruled the district. They were helped by Desastha assistants and by powerful local families. The names, positions and tenures of these officials, when compared with similar data for the districts of Kurnool, Nellore, Ellore, Vellore, Salem, and Madura,[4] indicate that while the outer

[1] *Elliot MSS., Local History*, I (IOL: Eur. MSS. F. 46), pp. 333–4; with parallel accounts in Mackenzie op. cit. pp. 35–38, and Henry Morris's *A Descriptive and Historical Account of the Godavery District* (London: Truber & Co., 1878), pp. 167–76. *Note:* Tanisha probably had good, practical reasons favouring local Hindu bureaucracies. Golkonda firmans indicate that these Shia kings developed a sophisticated state cult in which their kingship was deified.

[2] *Elliot MSS.*, 'On the Origin of Village Accountants', *Local History*, I (IOL: Eur. MSS. F. 46), pp. 101.

[3] Mackenzie op. cit. p. 38. *Note:* This folklore and song pervades Telugu country to this day.

[4] *Elliot MSS., Local History*, III (IOL: Eur. MSS. F. 48), pp. 1–240, 515–738. This volume contains detailed histories of Telugu districts taken from Sanskrit, Telugu, Marathi, and Persian sources.

surface of a local administration might have received some new place-names, different boundaries, and fresh *inam* awards, inner lines of power remained largely undisturbed. The average tenure of an Amildar in the Murtazanagar Circar for these years (1687–1748) was 1·42 years. Since the tenure of Hindu subordinates was much longer—it became virtually permanent, we may infer that compact groups of Hindu officials not only collected the revenues but kept a firm hand on the machinery of administration.[1]

Short tenure and varied conditions of appointment have made the Amildar a confusing figure in local history. Under different titles he could be and usually was given almost absolute control over his charge. What, since the time of Akbar, had been a dual system, at least in theory, came to be united in the person of the Nizam 'and became so in all inferior gradations of authority'.[2] The military and police powers (*faujdari* and *nizamat*) and the civil and fiscal powers (*zilahdari* and *shaikdari* or *diwani*) were combined. The sword and the pen came together in one person. At his level, the Amildar became the chief executive, legislative, and judicial power. In theory, nothing but his own personal weakness or the ruin of his district restrained him. As James Grant put it, he 'held a greater variety of trusts than . . . ought to have fallen to any officer'.[3]

In one sense the Subahdar of Hyderabad, the Nawabs of Arcot, Kurnool, Masulipatam and Rajahmundry, not to mention the more independent Rajahs of Tanjore, Mysore, and Vizapapatam, were basically nothing more than powerful Amildars who had made their offices hereditary and strove to keep their subordinates from doing the same. An Amildar of the Northern Circars was not much different from a Faujdar of the Carnatic except that he was more closely subject to the authority of Hyderabad. Nawabs and their Faujdars in the south were virtually independent of

[1] *Elliot MSS.*, 'Lists of Hakims or Officers Administering the Guntur and Ellore Circars', *Local History*, II (IOL: Eur. MSS. F. 47), pp. 62–71. Elliot received this from the Despandi of Gudur in the Masulipatam District.

[2] Great Britain. House of Commons. *The Fifth Report of 1812*, Appendix 3: James Grant, 'Political Survey of the Northern Circars'. *Parliamentary Publications* (IOL: Collection No. 56), pp. 631–2.

[3] Firmerger, op. cit. p. 25.

Note: In Guntur, as elsewhere, Muslim rulers worked out an attractive relationship with Hindu bureaucracy based on hard facts. The Muslims held power and skimmed off the cream. Hindu bureaucrats served up the cream and waxed fat in the process. The Muslims were mostly warriors, not clerks.

Hyderabad and of each other. Often, deference to Delhi and to Hyderabad was only ceremonial.

Actual administration in the Murtazanagar Circar was, to put it mildly, spasmodic and confused. The Muslim Amildars ruled through their Hindu subordinates while they themselves were preoccupied with entertainments, wars, and the politics of Hyderabad: 'A certain class of Hindus . . . relieved their ignorant, voluptuous Mussalman rulers from the intricate details of internal police and the management of Mofussil collections.'[1] At times, an Amildar ruled more than one district; and at other times two *hakims* or district officers were appointed to the same district. Titles such as Amildar or Faujdar or Zilahdar or Jagirdar, were in the Guntur District only temporary titles attached to very temporary officers.

Below the Muslim umbrella the older Hindu institutions continued much as before. What changes did occur appear to have been more in district personnel and terminology, rather than in institutions, which were 'merely an extension of the village institutions in circles of villages or districts'.[2] Names and terms reflect some of the forces and influences which worked at various levels of the administration.

The penetration of Maratha, Brahman influence is apparent from the titles of the district officers. The most important Hindu officer of the district was the *Desmukh*. He was the 'real' district officer. He was the permanent executive, the revenue collector, the agent of the government. He was the buffer between local inhabitants and foreign intruders, the cement of opposed cultures, religions, customs, and languages. Standing between the Muslim garrisons and the villages, the Desmukh could be a representative of local opinion and a check to despotic action. Next, the Brahman *Despandi*, who was the District Accountant and Registrar, receorded all official actions, registered all grants and privileges and kept all original rent-rolls, assessment papers and fiscal accounts. Since he was usually also the *Majmudar*, or Auditor, he was a potential check to all other officers. Then, there was the *Mannavar* or District Head of Police. Since the Desmukh and the Mannavar relied upon the sword for their immediate authority,

[1] Firmerger, p. 26. Mackenzie, op. cit. p. 344.

[2] *Elliot Report* to GOM, 14 April 1846, para. 99, *MRP* (281 : 20 : 7643), No. 39 of 6 December 1847.

they generally came from a martial caste, both offices often being held by one person.[1]

The Secretary, Office Manager, or *Sheristadar* held a pivotal position. He stored official papers, forms, stationery, and reports. He was custodian of district buildings and materials. He selected the host of writers and clerks needed for office staff. He controlled such lesser officials as the Record Keeper (*Daftardar*) and Cashier (*Shroff*). Should his superiors prove weak or ignorant, he possessed marvellous tools for power. As acting chief minister to the district officer, he held in his hands the seeds of power and the possibility of playing an influential role. Like the Despandi he relied upon his pen for his influence. If he were both Despandi and Sheristadar, the extent of his power would not be difficult to imagine.[2]

The Zamindars of Guntur were, in fact, the hereditary district officers just described. Hyderabad officials indiscriminately used and perhaps misused this Persian word for 'land controller'.[3] They applied it to those officials who were more permanently in charge of the country, to the Hindu administrators and rulers. Hindu Zamindars were generally of three classes: ancient hereditary chiefs (*samasthanam rajas*), hereditary district officers, and temporary or removable district officers. Of course, all Zamindars wished to show that they were ancient. Their rulers wished to keep them under their control by being able to remove them. Confusing as the term became, its application for Guntur is quite clear.[4]

The oldest Zamindar family in Guntur, the Velamavaru Manika Rao, seems to have held executive and police power over the entire Kondavidu Sima under the Vijayanagar Empire. Muslim ascendancy brought the Desastha Manur Rao family into the district. In 1690, the Mughuls divided authority over the forty-four *haveli* villages and fourteen *samutus* of Murtazanagar Circar between both families. Manika Rama Rao became Desmukh and Mannavar and Manur Pantruni Rao was made Despandi, Majumdar,

[1] Great Britain. House of Commons. *The Fifth Report of 1812*, Appendix 13: James Grant, 'Political Survey of the Northern Circars', *Parliamentary Publications* (IOL: Collection No. 56), pp. 631–2. [2] ibid.

[3] *Elliot Report* to GOM, 14 April 1846, para. 99, *MRP* (281: 20: 7644), No. 39 of 6 December 1847.

[4] *Elliot Report* to GOM, 17 April 1846, paras. 99–100, *MRP* (281: 20: 7645), No. 39 of 6 December 1847. There are many references to this point.

Sheristadar, Zamindar, *Kiladar* or Governor of Kondavidu Fortress, and *Huzur Nayakaram* or Prince.[1] While there is little doubt as to where Mughul favour lay, the Desastha family had trouble. In about 1710 a powerful Kamma family from across the river was introduced. Both the Nawab of Arcot and the Nawab of Rajahmundry had to intervene before an equitable distribution of authority, together with suitable *russums* (commission fees) and *savarams* (tax-free land-grants), could be made. One local chronicler wrote that '22 villages of Chebrolu Summut in the Talook of Chintapally'[2] were assigned to Vasireddy Padmanabhudu. From this meagre beginning, Vasireddy power quickly grew while that of the Manika Raos rapidly declined. In 1725, the offices of Mannavar and of Desmukh over 225 villages were conferred on the Vasireddy family. An imperial *sanad* later confirmed Vasireddy authority over five *mahals* or 'samuts'.[2]

Whenever Muslim power relaxed, Hindu officers of Guntur grew strong. Acting in much the same way as had the *Poliyagars* and *Nayakars* under the crumbling of Vijayanagar authority, local officers assumed high titles and dignities. Large portions of the revenue failed to reach the Hyderabad treasury: '. . . a continual struggle was carried on between the *Sir Subah* and the Hyderabad Sirkar on one hand, and the *Sir Subah* and the Zamindars on the other; while these had a similar game to play with the village officers and ryots. The whole gave rise to a general system of evasion and deceit.'[3] Guntur Faujdars were too weak to enforce their authority. A fort was built astride the Hyderabad road. Royal (*haveli*) lands were seized by refractory subordinates. Because of oppression, the district became depopulated and waste.[4]

In 1732, the Nawab of Rajahmundry, Anwar-ud-din, sent an energetic and severe 'Zilahdar' to Murtazanagar to extirpate those who had 'availed themselves . . . to usurp the feeble authority of their Mohammedan superiors'.[5] For seven years, Rustum Khan

[1] *Elliot MSS.*, 'Translation of Dandakavile at Condavid Village', *Local History*, I (IOL: Eur. MSS. F. 46), pp. 332–3. Names of samutus are given. 'Historical Memoir of Chebrolu', *Local History*, III (IOL: Eur. MSS. F. 48), pp. 91–102.

[2] *Elliot MSS.*, *Local History*, III (ibid.), p. 97. Firminger, op. cit. p. 64; Mackenzie, op. cit. pp. 344 ff.; Morris, op. cit. pp. 210–30. *Elliot Report*, ibid. para. 100.

[3] *Elliot Report* to GOM, 17 April 1846, para. 13, *MRP* (281: 20: 745), No. 39 of 6 December 1847.

[4] Mackenzie, op. cit., pp. 39–40. *Elliot MSS.*, *Local History* I (IOL: Eur. MSS. F. 46), p. 335.

[5] Mackenzie, op. cit. p. 41.

and his subordinates, some of whose names we know, kept a firm rule over the district (*circar*).[1]

It was probably during this period that a local Telaga family was raised to a position of power. Presumably as a counter-poise to the rapidly growing strength of the Vasireddy Zamindar, the Malrajus were given Desmukhi and Mannavari authority over the Vinukonda and Bellamkonda *parganas*. Malraju Narsu Rao built his fort (*kota*) in the heart of the district and called the town which grew up around it Narsaraopet.[2]

The political dissolution which engulfed India during the midst of the eighteenth century in a whirlpool of struggling Indian and European powers and which ultimately provided the opportunity for the rise of British authority, as we shall see in the next chapter, also plunged the district into a period of extreme disorder and chaos. The last Muslim officer to leave any semblance of coherent records for the district administration was the energetic and able Faujdar, Hussein Ali Khan. He tried unsuccessfully to bring order to the Northern Circars and to balance the conflicting pressures and claims of Hyderabad and Madras during the decade between 1759 and 1769. From records of his administration found in Hyderabad by James Grant, the Guntur District was described as 'anciently composed of five purgannahs . . . since divided into 25 mootahs, containing 868 villages . . . distributed under five Desmookees . . . and the 39 havillee villages of Kondavidu.'[3] Some idea of the extent to which territorial and administrative disorganization had progressed by the time that British officers assumed charge of the district in September 1788, is found in the statement that 'the Zamindars might have done just as well if they had drawn their villages by lot'.[4] The jurisdictions of the four great families were so hopelessly tangled and intermingled that delineation was almost impossible. Instead of five neat territorial divisions, the British came upon a muddle in which some villages were actually shared between two or three Zamindars. No situation could have been more in the interest of traditional local influence than this state of confusion.

[1] Mackenzie, op. cit. p. 41. *Note: Kulla-minar* or towers of skulls were erected to show authority.

[2] Firminger, op. cit. p. 64; Mackenzie, op. cit. pp. 301 ff.

[3] Firminger, op. cit. pp. 63–64.

[4] Mackenzie, op. cit. p. 345.

III

THE RISE OF BRITISH AUTHORITY BEFORE 1800

By the year 1837 the British were no longer simply *a* power in India. They were *the* power over India. The subcontinent had enjoyed virtually complete tranquillity for almost two decades. But Guntur had been under the authority of the East India Company for fifty years. And before 1788, the British Company had been only one among many contenders for dominion, both within Guntur District and within India.

The rapid decline of Mughal hegemony after the death of Aurangzeb in 1707, in which rival factions proceeded to tear each other to pieces and in which provinces broke away and became autonomous, once again enabled South India to free itself after an interlude of northern control. The Marathas, their power extending from Poona to Puri across western and central India, were confident in their dreams of empire. The Nizam-ul-Mulk, having in fact been an independent prince since 1724, presided in Hyderabad and held sway over much of the Deccan, the Northern Circars or coastal districts north of the Krishna river, and the Carnatic or Coromandel plains to the south. Still further south lay Mysore, a Hindu principality soon to to grow mighty in the hands of the Muslim soldier, Haidar Ali. Tropical hills, jungles, and plains of the extreme south were apportioned among small and restive kingdoms, most prominent of which were Madura, Tanjore, and Trichinopoly.

The next stage of political disintegration was signalled by Nadir Shah's sack of Delhi in 1739. Thereafter, events in the south hung suspended, waiting for the old Nizam to die. With no apparent strong man on the horizon to restore the political equilibrium, the field was open to the boldest wit and strongest hand.

Guntur District, then known as Murtazanagar Circar or by its

older Hindu name of Kondavidu Sima, occupied an important strategic position. Commanding the south bank of the Krishna river, the district sat astride the main coastal road which linked the Northern Circars with the Coromandel and sat athwart the key road into the interior. It was a crucial means of connexion or obstruction between the Deccan and the Carnatic. While it would have served better as the nerve-centre of an empire, its role was to be that of a peripheral no-man's land and frontier. For forty years, Guntur remained a bone of contention in a strife-torn country.

The only meaningful period of Mughal-Nizamate authority over Guntur was a span of sixty years from 1687 to 1748, from the fall of Golkonda to the death of Nizam-ul-Mulk. But even during these years, central control could not have been very strong. As has already been indicated (in chapter II), forty-two Muslim officers held charge in the district during these years in varying degrees of co-operation with local Hindu leaders, who not only collected the revenue but firmly grasped the administrative machinery. Further, the district was not only beset by frequent predatory incursions from without and violent rebellions within, it was torn by social tensions and communal antipathies, pre-Muslim legacies which Aurangzeb's puritanism had in no way diminished. Finally, the exceptionally severe rule of the Zilahdar, Rustum Khan (the District Officer, *Amildar* or *Faujdar* mentioned in chapter II), from 1732 to 1739, which left ghastly skull monuments (*kulla-minar*), only hastened the headlong course of deterioration, economic ruin, and civic chaos.

The old Nizam's death in 1748 precipitated the final stages of disintegration. Thereafter India 'witnessed a breakdown in the civilization which has but few parallels in the history of the world'.[1] Much civilization vanished. Old cultures were all but forgotten. People became strangers to their own heritage. Guntur was also engulfed in the midnight darkness which fell over the country.

That European trading firms in partnership with certain Indian trading communities could make an overt bid for political power is perhaps indicative of the measure of political fragmentation which had occurred. The world-wide struggle for supremacy between England and France, in which resort to armed hostility became a chronic condition during this period, spread to India and provoked violent conflict and deadly rivalry between the

[1] K. M. Panikkar, *A Survey of Indian History* (Bombay, 1947), p. 212.

English and French companies. Even during interludes of peace in Europe, the competition in India continued. Indeed, it was between 1748 and 1756, between the War of Austrian Succession and the Seven Years War, that European intervention in Indian politics became the rule.

A set of complex factors weighed in the rise of European power. Long-standing partnerships between European merchants and Indian traders gave ready access to indigenous administrative talent. But political power required more than imaginative leadership and administrative talent. It required military force, armed sanction backed by adequate resources of men and money. This requirement was met by a fusion of European technology with Indian manpower and resources, namely, sepoys and silver.

First, Indian fighting men were organized, drilled, and disciplined into effective military units by French officers. Regular pay gave them a sense of security. Uniforms gave them a feeling of solidarity and importance. Superior leadership, equipment, and training added a higher sense of loyalty and an *esprit de corps*. Only success in battle was necessary to harden the bonds of this modern fighting machine. The surprising ease with which Dupleix's tiny detachment vanquished the hosts of Anwar-ud-din in 1746 accomplished this, and more. The myth of European valour was born.

Second, money to finance growing European military establishments and political enterprises was provided by Indian princes. These leaders competed with each other in efforts to buy or to rent modern war-machines for the accomplishment of their private political ambitions. Little did these princes realize that they were competing for the purchase of Trojan horses, that they were actually encouraging and nourishing the growth of European power, that the number and strength of these military forces might loom larger and larger within their palaces, and that they themselves might ultimately be dispensed with altogether.

In the many-sided war of succession usually known as the Second Carnatic War, the French prevailed over their British rivals. A French candidate ascended to the viceregal pillow in Hyderabad. Dupleix soon found, however, that Salabat Jang could not keep his throne unless he was supported by a French contingent. For seven years, from 1752 to 1759, de Bussy's small force backed up the Nizam and furthered French interests in Hyderabad.

In return for this armed support, the French were awarded the Guntur District as a Jagir. The award of Guntur was quickly followed by the cession of the Northern Circars and virtual governorship of the Carnatic.

Yet even while Dupleix and Bussy were at the summit of their remarkable climb to power, the scales were weighed against them. A frantic and dizzying whirl of conspiracies and intrigues occurred. The French, with their system of alliances and sponsored states, had to depend too much upon open blades and upon naked fear. No ring-master could keep his eye on so many tigers at the same time; and no sooner would he turn his head than one beast or another would begin to stalk him. A cracking whip was no substitute for local support and loyalty. One village chronicler of Guntur recorded that the French 'came, annoyed the country, and held management . . . becoming tyrannic for seven years'.[1]

The scales tipped against the French when English reinforcements arrived by sea. At this critical point, France made some mistakes in policy which were disastrous. Dupleix was recalled. Home support was withheld. Bussy was ordered to retire from Hyderabad. As a result, in 1759, Masulipatam was surrendered. Soon the French could no longer hold the open field. Pondicherry fell two years later. An edifice of nine years' arduous and hazardous labour vanished.

The British succeeded where the French failed largely because of energetic leadership and timely reinforcement from home. In this, their mastery of sea power was crucial. For while they had much to learn from Dupleix on how to acquire territorial power, the success of English fleets gave them time to learn.[2] Already, by 1751, Clive's heroic defence of Arcot had enhanced British prestige and had served notice in India that, although European power in India must undeniably be recognized as a fact, there was an alternative to the French. Indeed, because they had an imaginative leader in Clive, ready to learn by Dupleix's example, and because they held the sea, the British were easily able to switch their operations to the north, to the commercially more lucrative and politically important arena of Bengal. Moreover, after Plassey, it

[1] *Elliot MSS.* 'Kyfeyat of Historical Memoir of Chabrolu in the District of Chintapilly', *Local History*, III (IOL: Eur. MSS. F. 48), compiled and translated by Venkata Row, Bramin, 1819, p. 97.

[2] Robert Orme, *History of the Military Transactions of the British Nation in Indostan*, I (London, 1803), p. 378.

was only a matter of time before the British would succeed in the south. The expenses of one sector could be paid out of the gains of the other. In 1761, at the very time when the Marathas suffered from the devastating blow at Panipat, a blow which all but dashed their dreams of empire, the British emerged as a major political force in India.

Yet, it was one thing to achieve power in India and quite another to hold it. Years were to pass before the British could buttress their power with stability and responsibility. During these years, Guntur became an important matter of concern, a strategic pawn in swirling struggles for mastery within the sub-continent. Without French support in Hyderabad, Salabat Jang quickly fell from power. Nizam Ali, his very able brother, took the throne and displayed remarkable adroitness in preserving his integrity and independence for the next forty years. Another brother, Basalat Jang, withdrew to Adoni and Kondavidu where he schemed and plotted and waited for his chance to sieze the Nizamate. Hussein Ali Khan was dispatched by the Nizam to govern the Northern Circars. But this Amildar was not successful in removing Basalat Jang from Guntur. The British, determined not release any territory gained from the French in 1759, offered to take the Circars for half their revenues. Hussein Ali agreed; and Company troops moved into the districts north of the Krishna river. Nizam Ali, however, was exceedingly displeased. Having failed to get Company support against Maratha incursions in one of his darkest hours, he was loathe to repeat the mistakes of Salabat Jang. A large Muslim army moved down to Bezwada, on the Krishna. The British quickly agreed to withdraw if the Nizam would foot the cost of their moving into the Circars. The Nizam's wrath mounted. At the last moment, Hussein Ali persuaded the Nizam to accept a gift of money. The British retired. War was averted.

Three years later, in 1765, Clive returned to India with orders to restore Company discipline and prosperity. On 12 August of that year, he obtained an Imperial mandate (*farman*) over the Northern Circars. Soon after, this claim was ceremonially proclaimed and Kondapalli Fortress was stormed. Nizam Ali speedily returned from the Maratha frontiers and prepared for war. After much difficulty, a treaty was drawn up granting the Northern Circars in return for 8 lakhs a year, together with two infantry

battalions and six pieces of field artillery. But again, within a year, the Nizam joined Haidar Ali in an attack upon Company territory. He was quickly defeated. A new treaty was signed in 1768. Except that this time the British held the high ground, little was changed. It was agreed that Basalat Jang should continue to hold Guntur as a lifetime Jagir. Actually, his hold on Guntur was a fact which neither side felt a particular wish to dispute.

It is not pleasant to dwell on the events of the next decade. Basalat Jang's partiality for French officers and his proximity to the Nizam's territory precluded any possibility of peace: 'Such a scene of plunder and rapine is presented by grasping renters, intriguing French agents, rebellious Zemindars and lawless bandits, that one marvels how crops were ever harvested or even sown.'[1] Adventurers and Company deserters flocked to Basalat Jang's standard. Munitions and stores were smuggled into Kondavidu from the ocean. Warnings both from Hyderabad and Madras went unheeded. Tension mounted. Haidar Ali, whose régime at Mysore had grown dramatically to such strength that it towered over the other peninsular powers, marched to Adoni and halted there only because he received a large ransom from Basalat Jang. The Company countered by sending troops into the ports of Motupalli and Vetapallam. Basalat Jang was now so thoroughly terrified that he did not know how to deal with the tigers scratching at his doors.

It is necessary to understand that there were no restraints or self-limitations in the Indian political system which might have served as a basis for order and balance. There was no common code of behaviour or international law. There was no alternative, for pausing on middle ground, between complete supremacy and utter subjugation.

Early in 1779, Thomas Rumbold, then Governor of Madras, rented Guntur from Basalat Jang in return for a fixed allowance of money and a promise of protection. This politically questionable act was promptly followed by an act, which was morally even more questionable, whereby Guntur was leased to the Nawab of the Carnatic, in return for private and secret remunerations.

The Nizam was furious. Not only had he not been consulted and not only was this a flagrant breach of the Treaty of 1768, but, to make matters worse, he was informed that the Company would

[1] Gordon Mackenzie, *A Manual of the Kistna District* (Madras, 1883), p. 77.

no longer pay him his share out of the revenues of the Northern Circars. To him it looked suspiciously as if Basalat Jang might become the British-sponsored successor to his own seat. It is not strange, therefore, that Nizam Ali sought Haidar Ali's support, and that of the Marathas. An alliance was formed. Already greatly annoyed by the British occupation of Guntur, Haidar Ali 'burst upon the Carnatic' with a strong army including 400 French mercenaries who lately had served Basalat Jang. The British detachment retreated but was caught at Conjeevaram (Kanchipuram) and virtually annihilated. Waves of devastation flowed over the Carnatic plains and swept up to the very gates of Madras.

Never had British power in India faced greater peril. The war in the American colonies was going badly. A concert of European powers, including France and Holland, was arrayed against Britain, almost cutting off Company reinforcements from Europe. Bombay bungling had enraged the Marathas; and Madras corruption, never more rampant, had precipitated hostilities with Mysore.

Plucking the burning brand from the fire before it could be consumed was perhaps the greatest achievement of Warren Hastings. With utmost dexterity, the Governor-General succeeded in dividing the Indian powers which were allied against him, thereby neutralizing Maratha might and winning Nizam Ali over to his own side. He ordered the immediate restoration of Guntur to Basalat Jang. But Madras procrastinated. Hastings summarily suspended the Acting Governor of Madras, sent an army under his best general (Sir Eyre Coote) into the south, and drained the coffers of Bengal to meet the emergency and to buttress British authority in South India. Disaster was averted.

In 1782, circumstances altered greatly. Both Haidar Ali and Basalat Jang died. A strong personality, Lord Macartney, became Governor of Madras. Macartney wished to assert the Company's right to Guntur at the cost of the Nizam's friendship. Hastings forbade him. Hastings wished to return the Northern Circars to the Nizam as well, considering them to be of little value. Macartney refused to comply with this suggestion, and rightly so. But it was the question of taking over the direct administration for the whole Carnatic, a question in which the Nawab skilfully played Madras and Bengal against each other, that most bitterly divided Hastings and Macartney.

Not until 1788 did the Guntur District finally come into the possession of the British. The death of the weak and ineffectual Basalat Jang in 1782 left the district to the far from tender mercies of the Nizam's Amildar, Saif Jang, and his associates. By the time Lord Cornwallis arrived in India to enforce British claims to the Guntur Circar, claims based on treaties, firmans, and previous conquests,[1] the Nizam was not entirely sorry to surrender the district. It was by then altogether destitute and unprofitable.

Enough difficulties were encountered during the next dozen years to give the British reason to doubt the value of their new acquisition. The transfer of power from Nizam's officers to Company officers in Guntur was largely an empty formality. Long under the almost exclusive control of its own local leaders, the district paid little heed to outside authority from any quarter, whether from Hyderabad or Madras.

Early failures of British authority within the district, which delayed the establishment of political and administrative stability, were due mainly to ignorance of local conditions and to lack of facilities for getting accurate information. More specifically, the troubles of the British during their early years came from four sources: namely, from village leaders, Zamindars, Dubashis, and corrupted British officers.

At the lowest level were the leaders of each village. These leaders used traditional devices to meet village needs. Separate funds (*grama kharchulu*) customarily met the expenses incurred by these needs. Religious festivals, temple maintenance and staff, dancing girls and musicians, public amusements and fairs, charities, gifts to dignitaries far and near, propitiations to gods and goddesses, office equipment and clerical staff (*sadaravarudu*), and travelling expenses for village officers attending durbars (*batta*) were customarily paid out of these funds. Since land revenues were also expenses incurred by the village and since the Karnam kept the account-books for both *grama mahasulu* and *grama kharchulu*, book-keeping was often lumped together. All expenses, whether revenues or expenses for local purposes, were, after all, a drain upon the resources of the village itself. Under the old farming (*ijaradari*) and

[1] Details of British takeover are in Mackenzie op. cit. pp. 69–83. Also see (Kumari) Sarojini Regani, 'Anglo Nizam Relations Pertaining to the Northern Sarkars', *Journal of Deccan History and Culture*, (Vol. iv, No. 2), July, 1956.

sharing (*asara* or *visabadi*) systems, the expenses both of revenue collection and local government had usually been born entirely by the village concerned.[1] In bad times, the village employed its extra resources in the Grama Kharch to purchase relief. But in good times, the same resources could be hoarded against future evil days or used to purchase or manipulate power on behalf of the village elite itself (the *grama rayalu*).

Hughes and Sadlier, the earliest officers sent to Guntur from Masulipatam, soon discovered the recalcitrance of village leaders, as did the Committee of Investigation sent from Madras in 1790.[2] Actual revenues far exceeded the amounts which came to the Company. Most Karnams kept two or more sets of books so that the Zamindar and the Circar (State) would be deceived as to the actual resources of their villages. The Committee concluded that it would be hopeless to try to regulate 'such an abuse' as the Grama Kharch and recommended its immediate abolition. All future village expenses were to be defrayed from the district treasury. Accordingly, a Telugu notice was circulated forbidding all exactions under that name and urging people 'to refuse and resist every demand of this kind'.[3]

Such a deeply ingrained custom, however, was not so easily to be legislated out of existence. The rule could not be enforced. The first Collector to take charge of Guntur in 1794, under clear authority from the Board of Revenue in Madras, soon noted the 'dexterity of the people in fabricating accounts'.[4] A sample check into the books of eighteen villages uncovered a disparity of 19,850 (Madras) pagodas which had disappeared into the pockets of village leaders. The Board of Revenue observed that such practices were bound to grow, whenever 'the hands of power over them relaxed'.[5] George Ram's retort came close to the heart of the problem: 'The inhabitants having so long laboured under oppression have acquired a proportional skill in every mode of evasion to which, I apprehend, the means of detection in the hands of the

[1] Robert Hughes's letter of 29 September 1789, as quoted in the *Elliot Report*, para. 83, *MRP* (281: 20, 7591), No. 39 of 6 December 1847.

[2] Anthony Sadlier (Chief-in-Council at Masulipatam) to GOM, extract letter 30 April 1791, in Appendix E of *Elliot Report*, ibid. (281: 21: 8149).

[3] Committee of Enquiry (Basel, Cochrane, Jones and Scott) to GOM, extract, letter of 21 Agust 1790, Appendix D of *Elliot Report*, ibid.

[4] Ram to BOR, extract letter of 5 August 1794, in Appendix D of *Elliot Report*, op. cit.

[5] BOR to Ram, extract letter of 9 November 1794, ibid.

Collector are by no means adequate.'[1] If villages could be rented out to the Zamindars for five years on leases for two-thirds of the gross produce—for 3.4 lakhs of pagodas, Ram felt that the sticky problem of trying to deal directly with village leaders could be avoided. This recommended course of action was followed.[2]

But, if dealings with village leaders were difficult, so were British dealings with the Zamindars. Father Manenti, an ex-Jesuit at Cambellpuram, gave a sorry picture (in 1789). A certain Papi Reddi had played the fool in that he had 'entangled himself with the Zamindars' by renting six villages for 6,000 pagodas when, while he would hardly draw 300 from the villages, he would be forced to pay 9,000 pagodas. He described some villages as 'depopulated'.[3]

The Great Vasireddy Zamindar, Venkatadry Naidu, overawed and dominated the three other zamindari families of the district and defied the British, just as he had previously defied the Nizam. The Masulipatam Council tried to curb his power by putting his cousin in charge of his holdings north of the river. Their attempt ended in humiliation. The furious Zamindar promptly crossed the river, razed the offending fort, and captured his cousin. A suggestion was made that Venkatadry's energies might be dissipated if he were put in charge of the territories of Vinukonda and Bellamkonda. This was rejected as altogether too risky. As long as responsibility lay with the inept and corrupt Council at Masulipatam, Venkatadry Naidu's power remained free and undisturbed.[4]

Even so, firm words were used. Golkonda rulers had demanded 12 lakhs and the Nizam, 14 lakhs of rupees. Surely the Masulipatam Council could ask as much. Agreements (*kabuliats*) were drawn up with the Zamindars for two-thirds of what was considered a moderate gross estimate (*anchana*) of annual produce. In addition, the Zamindars were ordered to make good the 30 lakhs of rupees which they had failed to pay to the Nizam's officers during the previous seven years; and they were held to be responsible for repopulating the district.[5]

[1] Ram to BOR, extract of 24 November 1944, ibid.
[2] Ram to BOR, 19 December 1795, *GDR* (975: 4–18).
[3] Mackenzie, op. cit., p. 346. [4] Ibid. p. 310.
[5] James Grant, 'Political Survey of the Northern Circars', in *The Fifth Report, 1812*, edited by W. K. Firminger, III (Calcutta, 1918), pp. 46–57. *Elliot Report*, para. 9, op. cit. (281: 20: 7488).

Unfortunately the decade from 1790 to 1800 was one of the most disastrous on record. The famine of 1791–2 was so severe that an estimated sixth of the poorer, labouring people died of starvation. A tidal wave in July 1791, washed away much produce and many cattle in coastal and river villages. The water, which remained knee deep for weeks, ruined the grain which was stored in pits (*patras*). The following year brought a severe drought.[1]

The Vasireddy continued to hold power and the other Zamindars engaged in family quarrels during these calamities. In 1792, Venkatadry Naidu boldly offered to pay two-thirds of the seven-year arrears and promised a revenue of 3·15 lakhs of pagodas for three years if he were given sole charge of the district. Arguing that only the Vasireddy seemed able to control the district, Anthony Sadlier and the Masulipatam Council favoured this proposal.[2]

But this questionable arrangement was never realized. In the wake of the reforming policies of Lord Cornwallis, the Masulipatam Council disappeared and the Vasireddy himself began to feel British pressure. He was compelled to release and reinstate his cousins in their villages across the river. A battalion of sepoys was stationed in his fort at Chintapalli. His small army was disbanded and he was allowed to keep no more police than would be necessary for the collection of revenue.[3] Even the Zamindar himself was for a while put under guard at Guntur.[4]

Despite the loss of his independence, the proud Kamma continued to display a brave face. He never returned to the palace which Company soldiers had desecrated. Instead, he built another palace at Amaravati. Built out of stone quarried from the now renowned Buddhist ruins, his new house was supported with pillars covered in silver and gold and was roofed with sheets of burnished copper. Nearby, gardens were laid out and temples restored. From this grand residence, the Zamindar exercised a powerful influence for another twenty years.[5]

Next, there were the Dubashis. Dubashis were double agents. The very nature of their duties as confidential servants and commercial interpreters to British Company officers made them so. As go-betweens, their very success depended upon their ability to

[1] *Elliot Report*, para. 10, op. cit.
[2] Ibid. para. 11.
[3] BOR to Ram, paras. 1–5, 21 March 1796, *GDR* (962: 120–30).
[4] Mackenzie, op. cit. p. 311.
[5] Mackenzie, op. cit. p. 311.

resolve differences, compromise opposing interests, avoid stalemates, and conclude agreements. As mediators, they drew foreign minds and alien cultures together. As Banyas, or Diwans, or Babus, they were a phenomenon in India definitely needed and distinctly fitted for the demands of a plural society. Whatever their titles, there always existed during British rule a group of Indian district officers, a bureaucracy of go-betweens who linked the rulers with the ruled.

A small but compact elite of Maratha Brahmans had long held the upper levels of local administration when the British came to Guntur.[1] They had served the Zamindars and Muslims. No doubt Komartis and Banyas were better suited to commerce. But Desasthas, with their generations of administrative experience, were best suited to government work. Moreover, they quickly became proficient in the English language.[2] A number of these Brahmans soon attached themselves as private agents to the new rulers; and with success, their numbers grew.

The first Desastha to gain power under the British in Guntur was Venkata Rama Rao, the Dubash of Robert Hughes. Together with an anonymous but notorious Papiah, an English translator named Accalamanti Narsiah, and other headquarters officers, he took advantage of the ignorance of his patron. By taking over the detailed work of administration, he was able to spread a net of cleverly fabricated records and of systematic embezzlement. By utilizing the disunity of both the British and the Zamindars, he strengthened the local oligarchy of Desasthas. But the winds of reform, which finally uncovered scandals and corruption, blew this person and the whole Masulipatam Council from power.[3]

In reflecting on the habit of his Indian officers receiving secret sums in return for favours, a habit which he attributed to 'an intemperate thirst for gain', the first Collector of Masulipatam wrote: 'A breach of trust . . . excites no self-reproach. They

[1] M. Ruthnaswamy, *Some Influences that made the British Administrative System in India* (London, 1939), pp. 87 and 293, indicates that Maratha Brahmans and their language dominated the administration of the Carnatic. We have noted that they entered Guntur in the Golkonda period.

[2] Row, Vennelacunty Venkata Gopal, *The Life of Vennelacunty Soob Row, Native of Ongole, Translator and Interpreter to the Late Sudr Court, Madras from 1815 to 1829* (Madras, C. Forester & Co., 1873), chapter 1. This is an interesting account of how English was learned.

[3] *Elliot Report* to GOM, para. 60, *MRP* (281: 20: 7551–2), No. 39 of 6 December 1847.

submit to personal restraint with a composure truly philosophic'.[1] Punishment, in their view, was not due to guilt but to the bad fortune of being discovered.

The next person to take over the local bureaucracy was Atturi Venkatachallam. Described as 'a vulture preying upon the simple people',[2] he was the last old-time Dubash in Guntur. His master, George A. Ram, the first covenanted Collector of the district, was also too old to change his ways. Together they held sway over the district for six years until they were dismissed for incompetence in January of 1800. Even so, the influence of Atturi Venkatachallam could be strongly felt behind the scenes for another decade.[3]

Finally, a lack of harmony weakened British authority in Guntur. The district was first put under the charge of the Provincial Council at Masulipatam. This Council, supposedly subject to the Government of Madras, exercised a dangerous degree of independence. Bickering among the authorities at Madras during this early period did not serve to dampen this insubordinate attitude. A committee, sent up to Maslipatam to investigate, reported scandals and the reasons for deficient revenue. Sadlier and Dobbyn, the Chief and Second in Council, died before the enquiry was over. Other officers were allowed to choose between resignation and dismissal. The Masulipatam Council was abolished in 1794. Henceforth, Collectors were to be directly responsible to the Madras Board of Revenue. Commercial activity—'shaking the pagoda tree' by government officers—was forbidden. All of the corruption and venality of the previous administration was to be swept away.[4]

The reforms did not extend, however, to those local people whose co-operation was most essential. George Ram, the first Collector of Guntur, needed more than linguistic ability to obtain detailed information about the land tenures and resources of the district. The Board of Revenue wanted to fix the validity of

[1] Oakes to BOR, 9 June 1798, in Appendix C of No. 39 of 6 December 1847, *MRP* (281: 21: 8115 ff.).

[2] Ruthnaswamy, *Some Influences that made the British Administrative System in India* (London, Luzac & Co., 1929), p. 87. The family name of this person is sometimes spelled 'Atmuri'. Mackenzie, op. cit. pp. 346 and 358.

[3] *Elliot Report* to BOR, para. 60, *MRP* (ibid.), No. 39 of 6 December 1847.

[4] Mackenzie, op. cit. p. 345. For constitutional position, see Sir Courtenay Ilbert, *The Government of India: Historical Survey* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1922), pp. 68–70. A. B. Keith, *A Constitutional History of India* (London, 1936).

titles, particularly of *inams*, so that fixed money allowances could be used instead of privileged land.[1] After much prodding, Ram finally produced an eight volume 'English Register' of supposedly all the lands in the district. This was far from satisfactory. After Ram was dismissed in 1800, William Gordon was ordered to continue the enquiry; but nothing was really accomplished. What records did survive from this early period were due to the efforts of Andrew Scott, the Collector who made the Permanent Settlement in Guntur District.

The oldest records of British rule in Guntur were those which were submitted by the Despandi of Kondavidu Samutu to Anthony Sadlier in 1789. These gave an account of the lands, villages, and *samutus* of Murtazanagar Circar, including *inams* but not the names of Inamdars. Accounts of Samutu Despandis for the six years prior to the Permanent Settlement also existed, giving at least some hazy figures for waste, cultivated taxed and untaxed lands, crops, cattle, ploughs, and population, and some idea of previous *sayaru* and *mahasulu* collections.[2] But Scott found these accounts much blotted and corrected, making their accuracy highly suspect.

Probably the most significant feature of the early years of British rule in Guntur was the difficulty which they had in obtaining vital information. This was particularly true with regard to the nature and extent of privileged, tax-exempt, or quit-rent *inams*. No figures on *inam* holdings materialized except for Ram's unreliable English Register. Finally, both the measuring standards used and the types of shorthand (*modi*) employed by village and district leadership emphasized a local desire to keep information secret.

[1] BOR to Ram (circular to all Collectors), 23 May 1795, in *Elliot Report*, para. 87, 17 April 1846, *MRP* (281: 20: 7600), No. 39 of 6 December 1847.

[2] *Elliot Report*, paras. 87–90, op. cit.

IV

REVENUE SYSTEMS: THE ZAMINDARI SETTLEMENT, 1802–1837

THE main pillar of British authority over Guntur District was founded upon the revenue administration. Revenue was of two kinds, that which came from agriculture (*mahasulu*) and that which did not (*sayaru*).[1] In a country which depended upon agriculture more than upon industry and commerce for its subsistence, land revenue was considered to be 'the grand, the permanent, the ascertainable pre-existent source' of wealth from which the sinews of power should be drawn.[2]

Actually, how much power was drawn from land revenue, before the coming of the British, how strong a political structure it supported, how large a military and administrative apparatus it could maintain in proportion to the wealth of the country, and how much it provided comfort and luxury to royal and noble households are questions which still vex scholars. Some lands (called *haveli*) were directly administered by officers of royal power. Other lands were handed out as quasi-feudal grants on tenures which ranged from very temporary and conditional to almost permanent and unconditional. Large political grants were called *jagirs*. Other grants, both small and large, were given in lieu of salaries under different names depending upon their nature, whether for religious institutions, schools and entertainments (*inams*) or whether for government servants (*maniams* and *savarams*). A substantial proportion of the villages of the district, perhaps a tenth, were *agraharams* held by Brahmans.

All of these types of grants indicate a degree of decentralization, of power fragmentation, of delegation, and of local strength

[1] H. H. Wilson, *Glossary of Judicial and Revenue Terms* (Calcutta, 1855).
[2] James Grant, 'Political Survey of the Northern Circars', in *The Fifth Report, 1812*, edited by W. K. Firminger (Calcutta, 1918), pp. 28–29.

which contradicts proud claims which can be found in the official statements of rulers in Hyderabad and Golkonda.

Another notion also existed (at least in modern times), that the King (or 'State') was sole owner and final arbiter over lands, that immediate cultivators were obliged to pay agents of the King, and that a fixed percentage of all production and enterprise should reach the Royal treasury in the form of metal specie. This notion is open to question.[1] Admittedly rulers usually did try to make good such claims and local interests sought to nullify or at least to mitigate realization of such claims. The very concept of land-ownership, as we know it in the West, seems to jar against usage in a country where concern over the produce of land apparently was of more importance than the land itself. Thus, if central control weakened, this weakness became apparent in the loss of revenue; and if the King ('State') realized less revenue, then some more local power gained and was strengthened thereby.

In any case, muscles of political power were constantly being tried. Intense bargaining over future shares of agricultural crops began before their seeds were planted. As harvest approached, more intense contests over who could make off with the grain, shorten the measure, or default on delivery occurred. Collecting agents could be put off with complaints, pleas, and bribes. Moneylenders gladly advanced bills of exchange, with crops for collateral. As harvest seasons ended, account books usually closed showing large amounts still unremitted to the collecting agents. Only instruments of fear could check the 'stubborn propensity for parsimony, chicanery and refractoriness' and the 'secretion or collusive dissipation of the revenue'.[2]

Revenue from other sources (*sayr* or *sayaru*) was equally comprehensive in scope and difficult in realization. Taxes on non-agricultural produce were, if anything, even more thorough. Along the Hyderabad border, frontier customs were demanded.

[1] For further discussion of this difficult problem, see the introduction to chapter x. A good summary of early British controversy, arising out of the positions of Grant and Shore, is found in F. D. Ascoli, *Early Revenue History of Bengal and the Fifth Report, 1812* (Oxford, 1917), pp. 42–53, 54–62; and also in a recent work by Ranajit Guha, *A Rule of Property for Bengal* (Paris, 1963). For a discussion on how terms and concepts changed meaning according to locality and period, see P. Saran, *The Provincial Government of the Mughals, 1525–1658* (Allahabad, 1941), p. 249.

[2] James Grant, op. cit. pp. 42, 29–46.

Sea customs were levied at every port. Inland tolls and imposts caught almost everything that moved. Collecting stations blocked bridges, fords, ferries, and roads. Taxes on houses, shops, stalls, brothels, liquor and drug retailers; duties on cloth looms, leather tanneries, salt pans, liquor stills, drug producers, metal works, and almost every form of manufacturing; fees on professions, licences, and legal documents; charges on religious festivals, temples, rituals, ceremonies, and special days; percentages even on court bribes, fines and confiscations: such were the kinds of *sayr* exactions before the British arrived.

Of course the amounts of demanded revenues actually collected were entirely a different matter. Times of disorder made non-agricultural (*sayr*) forms of taxation all the more repressive, since every petty chief (or robber) sought to enforce them. Demands from several different authorities might be levied upon the same hapless artisan. Theoretically, if such a process of exactions continued unchecked for long, virtually all commerce and industry would grind to a halt. But enterprise did continue, although to what degree we can not be sure.

The Permanent or Zamindari Settlement of Guntur was essentially administrative in character. It was a method of obtaining a steady revenue. It was a way of delegating authority. It was a form of indirect government, by which lands were handed out on quasi-feudal grants. Under its operation, certain distinct means of supervision, kinds of sanction, and arrangements of organization and personnel selection were instituted for the purpose of insuring a continuous flow of revenue. In the manner in which it was first formulated in Bengal by Lord Cornwallis and then later taken to Madras by Lord Wellesley and applied there and Lord Clive, it was a decision to allow local and semi-autonomous agents to take charge of the entire land revenue administration, if not more.

Such concepts as 'landowner' and 'proprietor' and 'private right', with their English connotations, tend to obscure the essentially administrative character of the Zamindari Settlement. Because of a wish to have a fixed, regular, and moderate income, the British-Indian State conferred 'proprietary right, that most powerful incentive to industry'.[1] No local, independent spirit

[1] BOR to Andrew Scott, para. 24, 29 December 1801, as included in *Goldingham's Report* to Cotton, para. 11, 13 December, 1839, *MRP* (280: 7: 2466), No. 30 of 16 April 1841.

sprang from the ground to defend this 'right'. The right was not hallowed by local tradition and custom. It was an authority delegated, and it was foreign. Presumably, a local leader might reason, if such high privileges with their accompanying obligations and limitations could be given, they could also be taken away.

The Zamindars of Guntur were invited to hold tracts (*mutthas*) hereditarily in return for regular, permanently fixed money payments to the British Collector.[1] Since the Guntur Zamindars were considered to have been no more than hereditary district officers, they were given ordinary titles (*sanads*)—titles which were alienable and divisible.[2] They were meant to be responsible for land revenue (*mahasulu*) only, and not for other revenues (*sayaru*) nor for police and justice. Neither the capital and labour required nor the actual harvest of a given year was considered. Each Zamindar was to collect one-half of the harvest, remit two-thirds of that half to the Government, and keep the rest. The State share was given an unalterable cash value representing average productivity calculated at below average prices. Although villagers were to be dealt with according to custom, they were to be protected from arbitrary expulsion by the fact that their contracts would be legally binding.[3]

All *haveli* (government) land was divided into *mutthas*, assessed and conferred upon (sometimes sold to) the Zamindars in return for an agreed revenue.[4] Since the accounts of the previous thirty years were undependable, since both Zamindars and Karnams tried to conceal the real resources of the country, and since the Board of Revenue, in its desire for moderation, set the amount far below what was recommended by either the Collector or the Zamindars, the Permanent Settlement of Guntur was anything but severe.[5] On the Board's orders of 29 December 1801, Andrew Scott drew up the *sanads* bestowing the magic of property. In

[1] BOR to Scott, paras. 1–4, 27 August 1800, *GDR* (3957: 118–36).

[2] *Note: Mutthadari* or 'proprietary' titles were ordinary as distinct from *samasthanam* or 'ancient' titles which could not be alienated nor divided among heirs, only primogeniture inheritance being legal. B. H. Baden-Powell, *The Land Systems of British India*, III (Oxford, 1892), pp. 654–8.

[3] BOR to Andrew Scott, paras. 3–6, 27 August 1800, *GDR* (3957: 118–36). *Note:* Actual prices never did fall to the commutation prices applied. Also, the later ryotwari system took no account of capital investment.

[4] Gordon Mackenzie, *A Manual of the Kistna District* (Madras, 1883), pp. 347–8.

[5] *Elliot Report* to GOM, paras. 6 and 7, 17 April 1846, *MRP* (281: 20: 7438–47), No. 39 of 6 December 1847.

return, the Zamindars were to pay the following revenues each year.[1]

Zamindar	Kasba	Villages	Peshkash
1. Vasireddy	Amaravati	333	Rs. 5,40,737
2. Malraju	Narsaraopet	323	3,38,792
3. Manur Rao	Chilkalurpet	79	1,26,700
4. Manur Rao	Sattanapalli	80	1,26,700
5. Manika Rao	Repalli	67	92,528
	Total	882	Rs. 12,25,458

In its anxiety to see this arrangement work, the Board scratched off roughly 40 lakhs of rupees due to the Government, cancelled 50 lakhs in personal debts due to Armenian and Komarti financiers in Masulipatam, and deferred the first full payment of revenue by eight years.[2]

Having grown up in a political jungle where regal power was weak and local impunity common, the Zamindars were not able to appreciate the purposes of British policy. The new settlement made it possible for them to enjoy annual incomes often larger than what they were obliged to remit to the Collector.[3] As a result, the Zamindars were able to live on an unprecedented scale. For fifteen years they tried to outdo each other, indulging in every

[1] *Goldingham Report* to Cotton, para. 10, 13 December 1839, *MRP* (280: 7: 2465), No. 30 of 16 April 1841. Also in *Elliot Report*, para. 14; *MRP* (281: 20: 7455), op. cit. and in every Settlement report, proceeding, minute of consultation, letter home, and dispatch on Guntur land revenue. *Note:* James Grant, in his 'Political Survey of the Northern Circars', gave the following tabulation of Hussein Ali's assessment for Guntur:

	Villages	*Madras Pagodas*
1. Vasireddy	300	1,32,000
2. Malraju	230	70,000
3. Manika Rao	180	75,000
4. Manur Rao	150	68,000
5. Kolluru (extinct)		6,000
	860	3,51,000

During the first twelve years of Company rule in Guntur, an average of only about 9 out of a demand of 11 lakhs of rupees was realized.

[2] *Goldingham Report*, para. 46, ibid. See also Section 8, Regulation II of 1802, A. D. Campbell, *A New Edition of the Code of Regulations for the Internal Government of the Madras Territories*, I (Madras, 1840).

[3] *Goldingham Report* to Cotton. paras. 13–17, ibid. (280: 7: 2467–71). *Elliot Report*, para. 6, loc. cit. (281: 20: 7439–42).

vanity, whim, and fancy. Support for '13 battalions of Native Infantry' could have been maintained by their annual expenditure.[1]

No picture of affluence was more striking than that of Venkatadry Naidu, the Great Vasireddy. He was careful to pay promptly for his 551 villages, 333 of which were in Guntur. He kept a retinue of several thousand men, 300 horses, 80 elephants, 50 camels and uncounted bullock carts. His palaces at Amaravati, Chebrolu, and Chintapalli, his town house in Guntur, and his other residences reflected his prosperity. He built temples and rebuilt the lofty *gopuram* at Mangalagiri. Over a hundred richly gilt brass pillars, 30 feet high, were erected at various shrines; hundreds of Vaidiki *purohits* were fed daily; shawls, gold, and jewels were distributed among learned sadhus; holy men were employed to pray for him day and night; and legendary sums were spent on festivals, sacrifices, fire offerings, and marriages. His weight in silver and gold was bestowed upon Brahmans several times. At great feasts and on 'auspicious' occasions, he handed out clothing and jewelry to village leaders and their wives. His *peshkash* ('tribute' or revenue) was paid in advance and 1·95 lakhs of rupees were deposited in the Guntur Treasury for withdrawal from Collectors during his pilgrimages. While in Benares he gave rich gifts to Baji Rao, the ex-Peshwa. On his return from Ramesvaram, he gave a propitiatory *nazr* of one lakh of pagodas to the Nizam in return for the title 'Manur Sultan'.[2]

To a lesser degree, the other Guntur Zamindars followed the same path. Only the Malraju, however, was able to compete with the grandeur of the Vasireddy. Malraju Gunda Rao kept 100 elephants in his stockade and became hereditary sponsor of the huge Kotapakonda Mela (a position he still retains). The Manur Rao and the Manika Rao families were already tearing themselves to pieces over disputed successions.[3]

The old story of dynastic decline now occurred in miniature. Instead of zanana poisons, rebellions and wars, the field of action for intrigue and conspiracy was territorially and tactically more

[1] *Elliot Report*, para. 7, ibid. (281: 20: 7443).

[2] *Elliot Report*, para. 7, 17 April 1846, *MRP* (281: 20: 7443–7), No. 39 of 6 December 1847; *Goldingham Report*, para. 30, 13 December 1839, *MRP* (280: 7: 24770–4), No. 30 of 16 April 1841. See also S. V. K. Rao's Arzi on social and economic development in Appendix A of *Goldingham's Report*.

[3] *Goldingham Report*, para. 31, ibid. (280: 7: 2481); and *Elliot Report*, paras. 17–22, ibid., and Mackenzie, op. cit. pp. 313, 317–21.

limited. Under the British umbrella, the families and particularly their servants schemed and struggled over the wealth of the district. The turning point toward rapid decay coincided roughly with the Vasireddy's death and with the Pindari incursion.

When he died in 1816, Venkatadri Naidu left two adopted sons, 551 villages, several palaces, and a movable fortune estimated at some 5·5 million pounds sterling (55 lakhs) in the hands of his two Desastha Diwans. The complexity of the struggle which ensued is staggering. While the liquid assets were dissipated within two years, the disputed succession lasted more than thirty.[1] How this litigation moved by intricate turns through a tangled maze of English procedures, Hindu laws, and a hierarchy of courts is a fascinating story of 113 pages.[2] By the time the final decision was handed down from the Privy Council, the issue no longer mattered. The fortune was gone; the Zamindari was resumed and auctioned; many of the contesting parties were dead; and two Desastha families were reputed to be the wealthiest in that part of the country.[3]

Jaganadha Babu, with 314 villages, was induced by Sabnavis Ananta Rao to claim the 237 villages of Ramanadha Babu. Ramanadha Babu was defended by Potturi Kalidas Rao. For years the two Diwans pursued the litigation, hired pandits, bribed witnesses, bought *mantrams*, furnished entertainment, and finally provided loans for the young heirs. Jaganadha Babu borrowed until the bankers (*saukars*) sued and then peeled the silver and gold off the pillars and copper off the roof of his palace.[4] Governor Munro, when touring the area, found both men tired of the suit and willing to stop; but their Diwans successfully prevented any amicable settlement.[5] After Jaganadha died in 1826, his two widows turned on each other, one producing a son to back her claim. During the next fifteen years, Rangama and Chava Lakshmipati (the adopted son) were pushed forward by the Sabnavis

[1] *Goldingham Report*, para. 30, *MRP* (280: 7: 2480), No. 30 of 16 April 1841; *Elliot Report*, para. 7, *MRP* (281: 20: 7466), No. 39 of 6 December 1847. Oakes to BOR, para. 45, 11 July 1819.

[2] Edmund F. Moore (ed.), *Reports of cases heard and determined by the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council on Appeal from the Supreme and Sudder Dewanny Courts in the East Indies*, IV: *1846–1850* (London: Stephens and Norton, 1930), pp. 1–113.

[3] Mackenzie, op. cit. p. 314.

[4] *Elliot Report*, para. 16, op. cit. (281: 20: 7463–5).

[5] A. J. Arbuthnot, *Selections from Minutes and Other Official Writings of Sir Thomas Munro* (Madras, 1886), p. 196.

family against Achamma, Ramanadha Babu, and Potturi Kalidas. A decision from the Sadr Adalat just after the terrible Guntur Famine of 1832 put Ramanadha in charge of the huge estate; but neither his capacity nor circumstances enabled him to succeed. The zamindari fell back under government management (*amani*).[1]

The course of the other Zamindars paralleled that of the Vasireddys too closely to be repeated. Supervision was relaxed for the sake of pleasure. Death resulted in disputed inheritance. Debts accumulated. Revenues failed to materialize so that the Collector was continually nursing their *mutthas* back to health.[2] Worst of all, zamindari administration was entrusted to Diwans who were bent on taking what they could as quickly as possible.[3] All that was needed to complete their ruin was a year or two of calamity. The terrible famine and epidemics which began in 1832 were more than enough. By 1837, the Zamindars were worse off than they had been in 1802, their debts to the Circar alone being over 43 lakhs of rupees.[4]

Under the Permanent Settlement, the Ryot was considered 'the keystone of its permanency'.[5] No longer was the Ryot to struggle with swarms of officials. He was to sow and reap feeling that each hour of work added to the comfort of his family.[6] 'A more industrious and substantial class of cultivators' was to rise which

[1] Mackenzie, op. cit. p. 314. *Goldingham Report* to Cotton, paras. 17–21, *MRP* (280: 7: 2471–4), No. 30 of 16 April 1841.

[2] *Goldingham Report*, paras. 22–29, *MRP* (280: 7: 2475–80), No. 30 of 16 April 1841. *Elliot Report*, paras. 16–22, *MRP* (281: 20: 7463–73), No. 39 of 6 December 1847. *Note:* A detailed chart of the years of *amani* management of each estate is given in each of these reports. After 1818, authority was continually alternating back and forth.

[3] The strong and destructive influence of these servants is amplified in Appendix G of the *Elliot Report*, *MRP* (281: 21: 8192–205), No. 39 of 6 December 1847. Seven letters on Diwans are given:
(1) George Andrew Ram to BOR, 25 November 1794.
(2) George Andrew Scott to BOR, 20 September 1800, para. 4 (Cherukuru).
(3) Andrew Scott to BOR, 13 November 1801.
(4) Daniel Crawford to BOR, 6 September 1803.
(5) Thomas Oakes to BOR, 26 May 1817, paras. 14–15.
(6) Thomas Oakes to BOR, 11 July 1819, paras. 29–32.
(7) John Whish to BOR, 14 June 1826, para. 15.

[4] *Goldingham Report*, para. 38, *MRP* (280: 7: 2486), No. 30 of 16 April 1841.

[5] BOR to Scott, extract from para. 25 of Board's letter of 25 December 1801, in *Goldingham Report*, para. 11, *MRP* (280: 7: 2465), No. 30 of 16 April 1841.

[6] BOR to Scott, extract from para. 41 of Board's letter of 25 December 1801, in *Goldingham Report*, ibid.

could make contracts (*darkhasts*, *pattas*, &c.) for 'moderate money rents' and which could be protected from abuse by the newly constituted judiciary.[1]

The identity of the Ryot, however, was vague. He could be anything from a 'poor ignorant peasant' to a 'principal inhabitant' or 'head cultivator'. The Telugu *rayatu* was confused with *rayalu*. The lowly village labourer was lumped together with members of the village elite. Generally and practically, *Ryot* was a title for one of the vocal and influential few, one of the *grama rayalu*. He was not one of a variety of menials and labourers who did the real work of cultivation on conditions ranging from daily-hire to near slavery. He took decisions and made agreements. Usually he was one of the top village officers, such as Headman, Karnam, or Munsif, and was often all of these rolled into one person.[2]

The Zamindar was faced with the same administrative dilemma as that which had faced the Government before the Permanent Settlement. At a lower level, he had to decide how much of the task to supervise directly and how much to delegate to others. Under a centralized system, the work would be done through his own Diwans, Vakils, and Despandis. Every person from top to bottom in his hierarchy would be accountable to the Zamindar. Under a decentralized system, the work would be contracted out to *Ijaradars* or Renters on competitive bids. These Ijaradars in their turn would be faced with the same dilemma all over again.

Ultimately, the task boiled down to how to extract revenue from the village and from the Ryots. The Zamindar or the Ijaradar had to decide whether to deal with the Ryots jointly or individually or whether to by-pass the village leadership altogether. A fixed money value (*makta*) could be put on each field based on a careful measurement of land-area, soil-quality, moisture, and other differentials. A fixed share of all crops produced (*kailu*, *varamu*, or *asara*) could be set aside as revenue. A fixed division of all lands and apportionment of revenue for the whole village according to this division (*visabadi*) could be made among the *Ryots*. How often such arrangements should be made for extracting

[1] BOR to Scott, extract from paras. 37–42 of Board's letter of 25 December 1801, in *Goldingham Report*, ibid.

[2] *Goldingham Report* to Cotton, para. 37, 13 December 1839, *MRP* (280: 7: 2486), No. 30 of 16 April 1841. This is just one of countless instances where the distinction is made. *Note:* Henceforth, we will use *Ryot* when meaning village leader and *ryot* when not meaning this.

village revenues also had to be decided. A money value on land did not vary from year to year; but the cultivator and the land under cultivation did vary. Crops certainly varied from year to year. Finally, one method could be used for irrigated land (*nanja*) and another for dry land (*punja*) within the same village. Obviously, great vigilance and energy had to be exerted in obtaining the revenue.[1]

The method of settlement commonly used in dealing with villages was a hybrid of all of these methods. Each village varied somewhat from the next, depending upon the constitution of that village and upon the competence of the Ijaradar or of the Zamindar's servants. The *makta* system was haphazardly introduced in a few villages. No uniform standards of productivity were established, and no money payment was required.[2] As a rule, an agreement was made with the Ryots each year. The Karnam or the Ijaradar usually became the responsible person. A settlement was made either for a rent or for a share of the total produce of the village by *darkhast*; or it was made in separate *pattas* for sub-rents or sub-shares of the village produce with each Ryot. The Ryots' and the Zamindars' agents eyed each other suspiciously throughout the year. *Mahasuldars* or 'crop-watchers', *Anchanadars* or 'crop-appraisers', and *Kaildars* or 'crop measurers' were only a few of those who kept their eyes on the crops because, when the *kailu* or 'heaps' were divided, each received a small percentage. This way of obtaining revenue at the village level was commonly called the 'joint-rent', 'village-lease', or simply the 'village' (*gramawari*) system.[3]

The co-operation between Zamindars and Ryots in obtaining a good settlement from the British did not survive long under the short-sighted and reckless administration of the Zamindars. As the Zamindars devoured their own substance, they were forced to reach lower and lower, exploiting the villages for all they were worth. Village leaders were forced to keep for themselves and to withhold from the Zamindars as much as possible. In the

[1] F. R. Hemingway, *Madras District Gazetteers*, Godavari (Madras, Government Press, 1907), pp. 164–9. *Goldingham Report* to Cotton, paras. 64–72, 13 December 1839, *MRP* (280: 7: 2509–23), No. 30 of 16 April 1841. An excellent detailed treatment of this very complex subject is given in J. A. C. Boswell's *A Manual of Nellore District* (Madras: Government Press, 1873), pp. 261–80.

[2] *Elliot Report* to GOM, para. 15, *MRP* (281 : 20: 7456–60), No. 39 of 6 December 1847.

[3] ibid.

tug-of-war which developed, every trick of deception and artifice of pressure was used.

Certain circumstances helped the Zamindar. Some villages were disunited either by communalism or by factionalism. Brahmans enjoyed unbounded influence in the district; but they were divided into many castes, each cordially despising the rest. Just below the Rajus, or Telugu Rajputs, were the martial Kapus, Kammas, and Telegas; and below these were the lesser Sudra castes. Komartis (Vaishyas), Bondilis, and Muslim traders were hated by high and low alike. More than a score of castes, were at the bottom of the social order. The lowest of the low, who loathed each other, were the Madigas and Malas. All of these communities shunned unnecessary contact with each other. Eating, marriage, dress, conversation and other social actions were closely circumscribed by family, gotram, sub-caste, caste, and so on.[1]

When village leadership was composed of two or more castes and when natural human vices were compounded with what many consider to be a special love for disputation and intrigue among Telugus, it was possible for the Zamindar to crack the shell of village solidarity. Whenever a village elite was divided against itself, he could play upon the discord to pry out what he wanted. One group of village leaders would grow fat with the Zamindar while the rest of the village was picked clean.

An efficient Zamindar—Malraju Gunda Rao was a good example—skilfully employed rewards and sanctions. Head Ryots, Ijaradars, and Karnams in his favour benefited. They were invited to feasts, petty *darbars* (audiences), *tamashas* (happy and gay occasions), and *melas* (festivals or fairs). They and their wives were recognized and flattered with clothing and jewelry.[2] Generous loans for seed or for special need were advanced to them through the Village Moneylender (*Saukar*). Recalcitrant Ryots, on the other hand, ran the risk of suffering from ingenious instruments of coercion, both physical and psychological. The *kitti*, a plyer-like device for finger squeezing, was the most common among many tortures.[3] *Pujas* (worship or magic) and *mantrams* (chants for

[1] Boswell, op. cit. pp. 202–60. J. B. Norton, *A Letter to Lowe on the Condition of the Presidency of Madras* (Madras: Pharoah & Co., 1854), p. 206.

[2] The Arzi of S. V. K. Rao on the social and economic conditions of Guntur Zillah, in Appendix A of *Goldingham's Report* to Cotton, 13 December 1839, *MRP* (280: 7: 2613–14), No. 30 of 16 April 1841.

[3] *Report of the Commissioners for the Investigation of Alleged Cases of Torture* (Madras: Government of Madras, 1855), pp. 14, 17, 36–47. P. B. Smollet, *Civil Administration of Madras* (Madras, 1858), pp. 1–34.

casting spells) were used to invoke evil spirits and sickness.[1] A new measuring gadget, an old debt, a denial of common pasturage, a contribution for 'auspicious' occasions such as a birth, a marriage, an investiture of sacred thread, a piercing of ears: the means of exaction were countless. In a highly personal way, a Zamindar could see to it that no one, whether servant or ryot, became rich, except himself.

The struggle was not necessarily unequal. A firmly united village could present a tight phalanx against the Zamindar. In most villages, where a single caste or an old coalition of castes was dominant, rival castes or factions usually had to submit or move elsewhere. Secrecy was the shield and bribery the sword of a successful village elite. On paper, these resources were concealed in the Grama Kharchu. On land, these resources operated silently in the encroachment of *inams* on taxable fields. Inspectors were deceived and the eyes of supervisors bribed until they closed. True records were hidden. Exact cultivation was not told. Real produce was taken away at night. Wealth was buried. In matching wits with the Zamindar, only a foolish Ryot showed outward signs of enterprise or affluence.[2]

Under the regulations, the terms and conditions of village appointment (the *daskhat*) were not properly fixed. A village office was neither inalienable nor fixed for a minimum term (Reg. XXIX of 1802). Revenue agreements, whether in *darkhasts* or *pattas* (required in Reg. XXX of 1802), were too hard to enforce. Ryots could move beyond the effective control of either the Zamindar or the Collector. Claims had to be pressed in the Zillah (Civil) Court; and prosecution had to be pressed in the Provincial (Circuit) Court. Both civil and criminal actions were hampered by English legal procedures and by the minuteness and secrecy of village operations. Poor ryots suffered from the expenses of litigation, but not village leaders. Knowledgeable Head Ryots and Karnams were by no means blind to the impunity afforded to themselves by the law.

[1] Good examples of this can be found in Elliot's notebooks; see Robert Sewell, *Sir Walter Elliot of Wolfelee* (Edinburgh, 1896).

[2] Daniel Smith to BOR, 21 June 1806, extract in *Elliot Report*, para. 83, loc. cit. (281: 20: 7594). *Note:* Smith wrote of the zamindari villages: 'the irregularity called Grama Khurch is still existing as formerly without any diminution whatsoever.'

V

REVENUE SYSTEMS: THE AMANI MANAGEMENT, 1800–1837

THE powers and responsibilities of direct, government-managed (*amani*) activities in revenue administration were substantially reduced by the Zamindari Settlement of 1802 and by the Madras Code of Regulations which accompanied it. Judicial and magisterial control was vested in a separate hierarchy, the main pillars of authority being the Zillah or District Court and the Northern Provincial Court.[1] Since land revenue was delegated to the Zamindars, the most important work remaining to the Collector would properly have been his supervision of the other sources of revenue (namely, the *sayr*).

But at the very time that this sweeping rearrangement was made, the Nawab of Arcot was forced to cede a number of interior districts to the British. Among these 'Rayalu Simas' or the Ceded Districts as they were sometimes called, was a hilly tract adjoining Guntur, known as the Palnad. Andrew Scott was ordered to restore this division to order in August of 1801. Because of its unsettled condition, Palnad was not broken into *mutthas* for zamindaris, but was 'held in trust' by the Collector under what was called *amani* management.[2]

During the years which followed, as the *mutthas* of one and then another Zamindar fell under the Collector for non-payment of taxes, from minority, or from litigation, *amani* was extended until at times the whole district came under the direct supervision of the Collector and his staff. The restoration of magisterial and police

[1] Regulation II of 1802. A. D. Campbell, *A New Edition of the Code of Regulations for Madras* (Madras, 1840). Also B. B. Misra, *The Central Administration of the East India Company* (Manchester, 1959), p. 158.

[2] Gordon Mackenzie, *A Manual of the Kistna District* (Madras, 1883), pp. 151–61. Palnad had formerly been under Nellore. On treaty, 31 July 1801: *GDR* (980: 99–100). Scott's orders, 6 August: *GDR* (980, 116).

powers in 1816[1] and of special judicial power in revenue matters in 1822 and 1831,[2] brought the Collector back to a position of supreme local authority. Of course, the Zillah Judge continued to exercise his authority over civil and criminal justice; but the Collector was once more the *huzur* of the district.

By taking on the responsibilities for direct *amani* management, the Collector inherited a number of problems which threatened his authority. During the period from 1800 to 1837, these developed along three main lines. British administrators were challenged; first, in their control of district personnel; second, in their dealings with village leaders; and third, in their attempts to implement a workable land revenue system.

After the Permanent Settlement came into force, two factors tended to weaken a Collector's power in Guntur. First, the demand for experienced officers in the Zamindari organizations and the limited supply of such officers meant that the Collector's opportunity to select officers was restricted.[3]

Second, instead of one British Collector steadily gaining local experience over a number of years, a string of short-term officers shuttled through the Collectorship without staying long enough to leave much of an impression on the district.[4] The absence of an experienced British officer who really knew what was transpiring in Guntur increased the boldness of Indian officers. The small Desastha clique were able to have things their own way in the District Headquarters.

Trouble already had been brewing in the Salt Department before Francis Robertson was assigned as Acting Collector to Guntur, late in 1810. A number of officers in Chinna Ganjam had been replaced. Atturi Venkatachallam's hand had moved (in the background) and Accalamanati Narsiah had been put in charge of the department. In the storm of protest which had blown up, Thomas Jarrett had defended his actions with what the Board considered 'unusual warmth'. But since 'considerable abuse

[1] J. A. C. Boswell, *A Manual of Nellore District* (Madras, 1873), p. 565. Regulation X-XII of 1816.

[2] Boswell, op. cit. pp. 576–7; Regulations XII of 1816, IX of 1822, and VI of 1831. See also B. B. Misra, *The Central Administration* (Manchester, 1959), pp. 267 70.

[3] A. J. Arbuthnot, *Selections from Minutes and Writings of Thomas Munro* (Madras: Higginbotham & Co., 1886), pp. 201–6.

[4] Mackenzie, op. cit. p. 359, nine Collectors in as many years.

actually exist[ed] in the Salt Department of every district', and since 'the complaints came from persons engaged in intrigue to serve their own ends', the Board of Revenue did not become overly anxious.[1]

Soon after his arrival, Robertson dismissed the Huzur Shroff, Tunuguntla Namasiva Rao, for embezzlement. Shortly afterwards, he also suspended the Huzur Sheristadar, Tandanki Lakshmi Narain Rao, and the Cashkeeper, Tandanki Sitarama Rao. The Diary Writer and the Arrack Daroga were implicated. Incriminating papers were found buried in a tank. Robertson reported, 'Most of the Huzur Cutcherry servants are implicated. I shall not take immediate steps against these servants as I believe them to be mere tools of two or three Head Servants.'[2]

The man who helped Robertson to discover these irregularities was another Desastha who represented a faction which wished to gain power in the *Cutcherry* (Headquarters Office). His name was Sabnavis Kasava Rao. His family had large interests and property in Masulipatam. One of his relatives was Diwan to the Vasireddy Zamindar and another was Diwan to the Nawab of Masulipatam.[3]

The *cutcherry* elite, on the other hand, were also strongly supported on the outside. The Diwan of the Manika Rao had been branded by Andrew Scott for his nefarious connexion with Atturi Venkatachallam.[4] Manur Rao Venkata Krishna Rao, the Chilkalurpet Zamindar had once provided the *cutcherry* junta with 2,000 pagodas for Thomas Jarrett, 1,000 pagodas for distribution among the cutcherry staff, and another 1,000 pagodas for a jewel to be presented on the occasion of the birth of the Collector's son.[5] In a letter from the Sheristadar to the Zamindar, which was intercepted, Lakshmi Narain Rao plainly revealed his close connexion with the Desastha Manur Rao family: 'Destroy my old and new

[1] BOR to Jarrett, 10 May 1810, *GDR* (963: 143–54). Also Appendix C of *Elliot Report*, *MRP* (281: 21: 8098–9), No. 39 of 6 December 1847.

[2] Robertson to BOR, para. 4, 21 February 1811, *GDR* (385: 23–39). Also his letters to BOR, 9 and 15 February, *GDR* (385: 2–8 and 12–21).

[3] *Elliot Report* to GOM, 17 April 1846, paras. 16 and 60, *MRP* (281: 20: 7550–2), No. 39 of 6 December 1847. Sabnavis Ananta Rao has already been mentioned above.

[4] Scott to BOR, letters of 13 October 1800, para. 5, and 3 November, para. 4, and of 20 April 1801; Extracts from Appendix C of *Elliot Report*, *MRP* (281: 21: 8095–7).

[5] Robertson to BOR, report of 20 September 1811, on Chilkalurpet, para. 18 of enclosure No. 1, *GDR* (385: 303–20).

letters. Subnevis Caseva Row has instructed all Chowkidars to intercept my letters. Be cautious in sending yours . . . direct them to Narain Row. My letters will be written by other people . . . I shall give my name to the bearers . . . destroy the same when perused.'[1] Like the Dubash in earlier years, the Sheristadar held a position enabling the exercise of great patronage and power.[2] Lakshmi Narain consolidated his power and stretched his hand into every branch of revenue. Not only did the Zamindars pay for his favour; but money also came to him from all of the *sayaru* departments. Government jobs were bought at auction and job-holders were pressed for 'charitable contributions'.[3] One cutcherry officer protested that 'for want of food and raiment' and for fear of reprisals, he was obliged 'to commit even roguery', to pay for temples run by the Tandanki family, and to act against the Collector, Sabnavis Rao, or any other threat to the cutcherry leadership.[4]

Robertson set forth the grounds for legal action against the cutcherry leaders and had the Sheristadar committed to jail.[5] The Board of Revenue was more cautious. Feeling that it would be well to watch out for '*malevolence and party spirit* among the natives who were formerly in the Collector's employ and those subsequently entertained to their exclusion', the Board urged Robertson to listen to what one party might say against the other since '*facts* once well established cannot be altered by the motives that may have led to their detection'.[6]

Robertson would have done well to have used this factionalism to strengthen his own control. Instead, he went out into the field stations to gather evidence of more mischief. While he found much wrong among the weavers, the *maramat* (public works) officers, the salt makers, the Lambardi caravans and so on, he did not collect much which would stand up in court.[7] He allowed the

[1] Robertson to BOR, report of 20 September 1811, on Chilkalurpet, para. 18 of enclosure No. 1, *GDR* (385: 303–20).

[2] E. H. Aitken, *Behind the Bungalow* (Calcutta: Thacker, Spink & Co., 1889), p. 75, 'all the district knows he is virtually the Collector'.

[3] Robertson to BOR, 21 February 1811, paras. 5, 6, 7, *GDR* (385: 23–39).

[4] Robertson to BOR, 21 February 1811 para. 7, *GDR* (385: 23–39). Also letter of 2 March 1811, *GDR* (385: 44–50).

[5] Robertson to BOR, 25 February 1811, *GDR* (385: 40–42). Charges detailed.

[6] BOR to Robertson, 7 March 1811, paras. 1 and 2, *GDR* (963: 343–7).

[7] Robertson to BOR, 15 April, 1, 6, 24, 30 July and 16 August 1811, *GDR* (385: 66–68, 224, 237, 272, 283, 300).

leaders in the Huzur Cutcherry to cover their tracks. A general destruction of papers occurred throughout the district. Back in Guntur, he found confusion and chaos in such secretariat departments as the *Daftarkhana* (Record Office) and *Sherista* (Accounts) Department. This was, in his view, 'purposely intended as by that means speculation [was] less easily detected'.[1]

Robertson wrote, what the Board no doubt had already guessed, that, 'A complete combination of the whole of the public servants in a variety of peculations exists in every branch of this Zillah which might be continued indefinitely'.[2] This combination was led by the 'principal servants in every department'.[3]

Meanwhile, Lakshmi Narain Rao boasted from his jail cell in Masulipatam that he would soon be back at his old position in the Cutcherry.[4] Tandanki Krishna Narain Rao, Accalamanati Narsiah, and Atturi Venkatachallam worked behind the scenes to resist the Collector. Relatives and friends—there were twenty-six relatives alone—who were 'linked by fellow feelings and a desire for mutual gain', filled most of the top posts in the Huzur Cutcherry.[5] These people were able to counter every step which was taken by the youthful Collector. They knew of every move he made, even obtaining extracts of his letters.[6] Having completely isolated Robertson, the Cutcherry next turned to the attack. The Huzur Shroff's accounts which contained the evidence of embezzlement were declared to be spurious.[7] Charges of torture and extortion were sent to the Board of Revenue against Robertson.[8] Even the former Collector, Thomas Jarrett, was visited by a delegation and his aid enlisted.[9]

While there was little reason for the Board of Revenue to doubt

[1] Robertson to BOR, 15 June 1811, *GDR* (385: 211–23). Appendix C of *Elliot Report*, *MRP* (281: 21: 8116).

[2] Robertson to BOR, 9 May 1811, para. 2, *GDR* (385: 69–74). Extract in Appendix C of *Elliot Report*, *MRP* (281: 21: 8110).

[3] ibid. Also Robertson to BOR on 2 March 1811, *GDR* (385: 44–45).

[4] Robertson to BOR, 11 March 1811; extract in Appendix C of *Elliot Report*, *MRP* (281: 21: 8109), No. 39 of 6 December 1847.

[5] Robertson to BOR, 20 August 1811, *GDR* (385: 303–20). Also 9 May 1811, *MRP* (281: 21: 8110–12).

[6] ibid. enclosures 1 and 2 of 20 August 1811, *GDR* (385: 320–3).

[7] ibid. See also Appendix C of *Elliot Report*, *MRP* (281: 21: 8110).

[8] BOR to Oakes, 11 December 1811, *GDR* (963: 619–39).

[9] BOR to Robertson, 18 February and 7 March 1811, *GDR* (963: 334–46) G. W. Robertson to BOR, 15 April 1811 in Appendix C of *Elliot Report*, *MRP* (281: 21: 8110).

that 'a systematic combination of the Huzur Servants of any rank in the Cutcherry with those in the Mofussil . . . attended with vicious consequences'[1] did exist, it was anything but pleased with the results of Robertson's investigation or with the interference of Jarrett. Much dust had been stirred up, with little solid accomplishment.[2] Both officers were censured; and Thomas Oakes was ordered to take over the district.

On his appointment to the Collectorate in June 1811, Thomas Oakes was told that since there was little doubt that a tight combination existed, it would be wise to move with caution.[3] The new Collector was faced with a disrupted administration, a group of delinquent headquarters officers, and a number of accusations against Robertson.

Both Oakes and the Board of Revenue agreed, after an examination, that the evidence against Robertson was largely false. Some men had been flogged. Some property had been seized. A gallows and leg-irons had been ostentatiously displayed. But no deliberate cruelty, such as putting a man in the sun, had occurred. Robertson was just 'a young man full of ambition having an ardent desire to uphold the justice and honour of the Company'. 'In the public interest', he was kept on as Head Assistant Collector under Oakes.[4]

Sabnavis Kasava Rao and the other interlopers who had deceived Robertson and caused dissension in the Cutcherry were dismissed.[5] So were the more obstreperous leaders of the older cutcherry clique. Among the nine suspensions which were upheld were the Huzur Sheristadar, the Huzur Shroff, the Huzur Daftardar, and the Motarpha Daroga for Guntur Town.[6] A man

[1] Robertson to BOR, 20 August 1811 (enclosure No. 1), in Appendix C *Elliot Report*, *MRP* (281: 21: 8120), No. 39 of 6 December 1847.

[2] BOR *Proceedings* of 30 May and 27 June 1811, in Appendix C of *Elliot Report*, *MRP* (281: 21: 8125). BOR to Oakes, 10 September 1811, *GDR* (963: 408–96).

[3] BOR to Oakes, 10 September 1811, para. 6, *GDR* (963: 408–96).

[4] Oakes to BOR, 21 January 1814, *GDR* (982: 37–38). BOR to Oakes, 12 March 1812, paras. 2 and 3, *GDR* (963: 819–31). BOR to Oakes, 7 December 1813 and 21 March 1814, *GDR* (966: 291–6 and 967: 236).

[5] BOR to Oakes, paras. 2–4, 15 October 1813, *GDR* (966: 175–83). Appendix C of *Elliot Report*, *MRP* (281: 21: 8128–32). Oakes to BOR, para. 2, 21 January 1814 *GDR* (983: 37–38). Oakes to BOR, paras. 1–10, 19 January 1814 *GDR* (983: 31–36).

[6] Oakes to BOR, 15 August 1812, *GDR* (981: 443). BOR to Oakes, paras. 1–4, 6 July 1812, *GDR* (965: 118–22). Oakes to BOR, paras. 34–36, 22 January 1813, *GDR* (981: 18–60).

named Lakshmiah, who came from outside the district and who was thought to have no connexions in the Cutcherry, was put in charge of the headquarters staff.[1] Factionalism between contending groups was thus at least temporarily dampened and the subversive propensities of the cutcherry elite held in check.

Yet, the country could not be governed without co-operation from these Indian district officers. The Board of Revenue was anxious to see that the Collector was not carried away again by impatience and zeal. Disciplinary measures would have to be slow and thorough, based on careful proceedings arising from first-hand and not hearsay evidence. Oakes was urged to keep an especially vigilant eye upon those who 'handled public money' and upon the accounts connected therewith.[2]

Well might such advice be heeded; for trouble ever recurred where money and accounts were concerned. The ancient craft of counterfeiting—chipping, shaving, plating—abounded. False coin was substituted and passed on. The Government and people were covertly encouraged to blame each other. Many kinds of coin were in circulation (not until 1836 was legal tender standardized) and moneychanging was a profitable business. Shroffs and treasury officials stood to gain in these and in many other ways. Nor were accountants without the means to turn their skills to good purpose: writing unknown symbols (*modi*) and keeping alternate sets of books.[3]

By taking advantage of factions among the cutcherry servants, 'most of whom [were] related to each other',[4] Oakes was able to gather evidence of fabricated accounts and tampered coinage, together with a detailed list of proven bribes. The new Government Servants' Conduct Rules of 20 November 1813, made the

[1] BOR to Oakes, 21 July 1817, *GDR* (974: 112–25). Oakes to BOR, 14 August 1818, *GDR* (984: 61–71), with whole record of Lakshmiah.

[2] BOR to Oakes, 6 July 1812, *GDR* (965: 120–2); 28 March 1814, *GDR* (967: 260–71).

[3] Oakes to BOR, 24 June 1813: *GDR* (982: 275). Oakes to BOR, 15 March 1814, *GDR* (983: 115–248); this is one of the most extensive descriptions of methods of operations which I have found. For an abstract of charges, see Oakes to BOR, 20 March 1815, *GDR* (983: 257–74). A colourful and entertaining picture is found in C. F Kirby, *Adventures of an Arcot Rupee* (London, 1867). For Munro's suggestions on coinage, see BOR to Oakes, 26 December 1811, *GDR* (962: 660–92). The problem fills early correspondence. Special concern over counterfeiting was voiced in BOR to Oakes, 4 March 1814, *GDR* (967: 228–30).

[4] Oakes to BOR, paras. 2–4, 15 March 1814, *GDR* (983: 115 ff.)

accepting of bribes a punishable offence.[1] The Collector felt that the offenders should 'be rendered incapable of ever again serving the Honourable Company', that their names should be published in the Government Gazette 'for sake of example', and that they should be given a choice between imprisonment or repayment of the Rs. 11,000 which had been taken.[2] The Board of Revenue, while agreeing that the 'presumptive proofs' were strong, did not favour prosecution, feeling that it was better to dismiss the worst offenders than to risk failure in court.[3]

Trouble with combinations of district officers in many districts[4] gave Madras authorities cause for serious concern during this period. After consideration, these subversive tendencies were attributed to 'the defects of their education, uncertainty of their promotions, meagre pay, and the uncertainty of their tenure of office'.[5] Among the various remedies suggested by the Government of Madras in 1816 were: the establishment of schools for educating these officers; increased salaries and pensions; and some special incentives such as larger commissions for salt and customs officers and opportunities to acquire *maniam* grants.[6] In order to stop 'the artful intrigues, the corrupt compacts, the daring embezzlements, the hardy frauds, the shameless perjuries', the Board and Government agreed with Sir Thomas Munro that the same remedies should be applied to Indian officers as had been applied to European officers of the Company.[7] Since the Sheristadar was considered to be the key to the whole problem, the ceiling of his salary was lifted to a much higher level. A Huzur Sheristadar who started with a monthly pay of 60 pagodas (Rs. 210) and who worked diligently for thirty years could now obtain as much as 200 pagodas (Rs. 700) instead of having his pay frozen at 80 or 100

[1] BOR to Oakes, 13 November 1813, *GDR* (982: 498–9). Oakes to BOR 20, January 1814, *GDR* (983: 40–41), list of bribes.

[2] Oakes to BOR, 22 January 1813, paras. 34–36, *GDR* (982: 18–60). Appendix C of *Elliot Report*, *MRP* (281: 21: 8126 ff.), No. 39 of 6 December 1847. This refers specially to troubles in the Salt Department.

[3] BOR to Oakes, paras. 1–4, 15 October 1813, *GDR* (966: 175–83). Also in Appendix C of *Elliot Report*, loc. cit. (281: 21: 8131).

[4] M. Ruthnaswamy, *Some Influences that made the British Administrative System in India* (London: Luzac & Co., 1939), pp. 87 ff. One of the most notorious subversive organizations was that of Casee Chetty, Coimbatore.

[5] BOR to Oakes, paras. 2–3, 22 April 1816, *GDR* (971: 268 ff.).

[6] ibid. *Note:* Little actually came of most of these proposals.

[7] Ricketts, *Report of the Commissioner for the Revision of Civil Salaries and Establishments* (Calcutta: John Grey, 1858), p. 335. Also, ibid.

pagodas. At the same time, more severe penalties against fraud, bribery, and embezzlement were passed.[1]

What served best to check the spirit of intrigue and to control subversion within the Guntur Cutcherry, however, was the fact that for twenty years there was a steady hand on the administration. Thomas Oakes rules the district from 1811 to 1821. He was followed by John Whish, who ruled until 1831. Other incidents, of course, occurred to undermine authority; but these two men by their very presence gave stability and continuity to local administration.[2]

Only years of *amani* experience could show what strength lay beneath the surface of the small and seemingly insignificant villages. Eventually, a series of disclosures from Grama Kharchu and Inam records revealed a steady, silent encroachment upon the power of the State.

Daniel Crawford, after observing how Grama Kharchu worked in Palnad, wrote that it was 'a source of lamentable injury to the poor and ignorant ryots, and the most material obstacle to the improvement of the country'.[3] Unless supervised, Samutudars would certainly combine with Karnams, Kapus (Reddi Head Ryots), and Despandis at the expense of the poor ryots and hide their profits in the Grama Kharchu accounts.[4] Such an insidious process would result in wholesale emigration from the district. The 'prosperity and happiness of the majority of the population' was blocked by local officers.[5] The Thanadar and all the Samutudars in Palnad were dismissed; the Karnams were severely warned and told that no money was to be paid without proper sanctions and receipts; but these orders 'were never complied with'.[6] All Crawford could obtain was a register of total collections (*kistu*) for each village; moreover, he had no way of knowing if these were correct. No Collector could personally check into the

[1] BOR to Oakes, 22 April 1816, *GDR* (971: 268 ff.). Ricketts, loc. cit. Regulation VII of 1817, and IX of 1822 in A. D. Campbell's *Code of Regulations* (Madras, 1840).

[2] *Elliot Report* to BOR, para. 60, 17 April 1846, *MRP* (IOL: 281: 20: 7552), No. 39 of 6 December 1847. Mackenzie, op. cit. p. 359.

[3] Daniel Crawford to BOR, para. 12, 18 July 1804, in Appendix B of *Elliot Report*, ibid. (281: 21: 8150).

[4] Crawford to BOR, 18 July 1804, para. 12, Appendix E of *Elliot Report*, *MRP* (281: 21: 8151), No. 39 of 6 December 1847.

[5] ibid. (281: 21: 8150).

[6] ibid. para. 13 (281: 21: 8152–3).

accounts of every village. The help of a co-operative staff was essential.

The next officer to give serious attention to the problem was Thomas Oakes. When he turned his attention to the *amani* management of the Palnad, he found 'the whole of the servants in league to defraud the Circar'.[1] A hierarchy of fear was established with the Grama Kharchu as its foundation and with that twice dismissed officer, Accalamanati Narsiah, at its pinnacle.[2] 'In nearly every village of the Palnad', accounts were either concealed or fabricated.[3] After digging 'in distant villages, in pots of grain, and in baskets of cotton . . . buried in the ground or sunk in tanks', Oakes disclosed that Grama Kharchulu were used to disguise a graduated scale of *nazranulu* (gifts) reaching up through the levels of hierarchy to the district Cutcherry.[4]

When the Chilkalurpet and Sattanapalli lands came under *amani* in 1816, Thackeray, who was in charge while Oakes was on leave, reported that he could find no accounts 'owing to the extreme knavery of the zemindary curnums'.[5] In 1818, Oakes wrote that in these estates collections and disbursements had 'always been made by the Head Inhabitants, Curnums and Caupoos'; nor had there ever been 'a sufficient check on these people to prevent their plundering the lower ryots or occasioning balances by their exorbitant demands'.[6]

Shortly after the death of Venkatadry Naidu when the Vasireddy villages in Guntur had to be taken over temporarily, Oakes found 'a general combination to plunder . . . entered into' by the local leaders.[7] Jaganadha Babu refused to show his divisional (*samutu*) accounts for 121 villages. Karnams in his villages also refused to co-operate. Not until the exasperated Collector resorted

[1] Oakes (Report on Palnad) to BOR, paras. 22–30, 20 June 1812, Appendix C of *Elliot Report*, *MRP* (281: 21: 8132), No. 39 of 6 December 1847. Also in *GDR* (981: 320–87).

[2] ibid. (281: 21: 8133).

[3] ibid.

[4] Oakes (Report to Palnad) to BOR, 20 June 1812, Appendix C of *Elliot Report*, *MRP* (281: 21: 8133), No. 39 of 6 December 1847. See also Thomas Oakes to BOR, 11 July 1813, para. 16, *GDR* (982: 304–29).

[5] Acting Collector (John Thackeray) to BOR, 12 October 1816, para. 9, Appendix D of *Elliot Report*, *MRP* (281: 21: 8139), No. 39 of 6 December 1847.

[6] Oakes to BOR (Report on Manur Rao Zamindaris), 30 September 1818, para. 15, *GDR* (984: 152–246).

[7] Oakes to BOR, 26 May 1817 paras. 3–7, Appendix D of *Elliot Report*, *MRP* (281: 21: 8140), No. 39 of 6 December 1847. Oakes wanted to avoid blame for not discovering abuses earlier. See also *BOR* to Oakes, 5 June 1817, *GDR* (974: 35–41).

to rattaning in public did he obtain far from adequate records for seventy-four villages.

In his report of 3 September 1818, Oakes made a detailed analysis of the operation of Grama Kharchu. Originally, this institution was meant to defray necessary village expenses, reimburse village officers for their work, and pay the costs of settling disputes. Oakes found the fund used chiefly to bribe officers at the cutcherry or at the courts. Three sets of accounts were kept by every Karnam: the true one was concealed, and the others were used to deceive the Government and the Zamindar. Bribes were usually listed as gifts to gods, a practice hardly surprising since cutcherry officers were, after all, servants of a divinity, namely, the *huzur*.[1] Extra money was simply taken out of village funds as needed and the accounts were then manipulated to gloss over discrepancies. Thomas Oakes was convinced that the Grama Kharchu unduly extended and strengthened the influence of the village against higher authority.[2]

According to the Madras Regulations of 1802, titles (*sanads*) to *inam* lands were not valid unless they had been obtained prior to 26 February 1768. Grants obtained after that date could be resumed by the Government. Grants not registered within a year of the proclamation of this ruling by the Collector could be fully assessed; moreover, grants had to be re-registered every five years or be liable to forfeiture.[3]

The snag in this whole arrangement, however, was that the Government could not recover invalid *inams* without recourse to the Zillah Court.[4] Before this could be done, a complete, accurate, and detailed registration of every grant had to be obtained and then maintained. If this registration were not done, not only would the Government be without a just claim, but all other land would be subject to continual encroachment. Since there were literally hundreds of petty *inams* and *maniams*, not to mention larger *savarams* and *agraharams*,[5] this was almost an impossible task; furthermore, the uncertainty, the expense, and the very

[1] Local tradition still ascribes divine attributes to the high and mighty. Concepts such as *karma* and *dharma* reinforced this belief.

[2] Oakes to BOR (Report on Manur Rao Zamindaris), paras. 15–16, 30 September 1919, *GDR* (984: 152–246).

[3] Regulation XXXI of 1802, sections 1–19. See A. D. Campbell's *Code of Regulations* (Madras: Government Press, 1840). [4] ibid., section 18.

[5] Guntur Collectorate, General Branch, *Index to GDR* (Guntur, 1913). There were seventy-three cases of *inam* encroachment in 1912.

magnitude of contesting each claim made this arrangement even more ridiculous from the administrator's point of view.

As has already been pointed out, early efforts to register land, such as Ram's register, had been an utter failure. A proclamation issued by Daniel Crawford in 1803 that all grants were to be registered also brought no success.[1] When John Byng, the Zillah Judge and Magistrate of Guntur in 1807, asked for a copy of the Guntur Inam Register, he was informed that no such register existed.[2] Another proclamation resulted in the creation of a rough register, nine folio volumes long, listing the Inamdars in the order of their appearance. It was later proved that this register contained less than a tenth of the actual *inam* lands.[3]

No more was heard of the matter until Thomas Oakes brought it up in 1813. Convinced that years would be wasted if the *inam* question were left to the courts, he suggested that a committee should be appointed 'to settle in perpetuity' all *inam* lands.[4] He was certain that 'nearly the whole of the present maniams would be resumed and the illegitimate profit now enjoyed by a set of vicious and intriguing Bramins be brought to Government'.[5] Most *agraharam* villages, he was sure, stood on the flimsiest of documentary authority.[6]

Again the subject lapsed into fitful slumber until Oakes toured the Palnad in 1821 to see about famine relief. He was disturbed by the way in which the poor and the Government alike suffered at the expense of the village leaders. Often more than half of a village was claimed as *maniam* land. *Maniam* boundaries were anything but clear and sometimes non-existent. Special lands (*jarib*) meant for relief in times of calamity had been appropriated. Dead and long departed persons were fictitiously listed as Inamdars so that the Karnams could enjoy the benefits. After trying to register some of these lands so that further encroachment at the expense of the revenue might be checked, Oakes admitted that his efforts were all but useless.[7]

[1] *Elliot Report* to GOM, para. 86, 17 April 1846, *MRP* (281: 20: 7602), No. 39 of 6 December 1847. Crawford to BOR, 14 May 1807.

[2] ibid. paras. 86 and 90. Crawford to BOR, 14 May 1807.

[3] ibid. para. 90. Orders to local officers given in 1798, 1804, 1807, 1823, 1826.

[4] Oakes to BOR (Palnad Settlement Report), paras. 5, 13–14, 34–35, 11 July 1813, *GDR* (982: 304–29). Also *Elliot Report*, para. 86, ibid.

[5] ibid.

[6] ibid.

[7] Oakes to BOR, paras. 21–23, 10 March 1821, Appendix C of *Elliot Report*, *MRP* (281: 21: 8141–5), No. 39 of 6 December 1847.

Two years later, John Whish tried to cope with the problem of Karnams' *maniams* among zamindari villages. He was disturbed by the fact that the office and service land of a Karnam was usually held by the whole family of the Karnam. When the Collector asked questions about the holder of the official *daskhat* (appointment) and the official *inam*, each family member would shift responsibility to another. Unless a whole family were present—often as many as twenty persons—little could be done. Even their progress depended largely upon the temper and inclination of these families.[1]

Whish assigned a small staff to investigate all the *inams* of the district in order to compile a reliable Inam Register. He decided to compare his results with those in the earlier 'Register of 1807'; however, the two copies which he found did not square with each other. He found that the more recent copy listed ninety more Inamdars and 169 more *kuchelas* of land than the older copy; furthermore, these newer Inamdars were almost entirely residents of Guntur Town. By putting two and two together, Whish came to the conclusion that the more recent copy had been removed from the Cutcherry by the Daftardars and that new pages had been inserted. Neither copy was reliable enough for use.[2]

Whish's investigation was never completed. The material in his register was never tested for authenticity nor compiled in a proper form. Even so, a total of 696 villages were examined, including all of the Vasireddy and Malraju villages. Comparisons which he made between his own findings and what was to be found in the accounts of the Zamindari Despandis convinced him that at least a quarter of the *inams* were invalid. *Agraharams* and *inams* were rarely listed accurately, the tendency being to list more land than what the titles (*sanads*) had originally granted.[3]

The introduction of the *ryotwari* system first in Palnad and then in Guntur proper was a slow and painful process. It was hindered

[1] Whish to BOR, paras. 4–7, 2 December 1822, Appendix D of *Elliot Report*, ibid. (281: 21: 8145–8).

[2] Elliot to GOM, para. 90, 14 April 1846, *MRP* (281: 20: 7616), No. 39 of 6 December 1847.

[3] ibid. paras. 89–92. *Note:* Accalamanati Narsiah was involved in these activities. Extracts which Oakes had given out to Inamdars, though unauthenticated as documents, were used as evidence in court; see Whish to BOR, 26 January 1827, *GDR* (3983: 10–16, 24–33).

not only by normal bureaucratic foot-dragging and by the competition of *zamindari* and *gramawari* (village) systems at policy-making levels, but by barriers of local usage and entrenchment.

Palnad was too unsettled in the beginning to be divided and sold under the Permanent Settlement. Ijaradars rented villages, capriciously altering their demands from year to year. After a rough survey, Crawford issued triennial leases to village Ryots.[1] New and better solutions were argued while this system continued. The Board of Revenue, convinced that the ryotwari system was harmful and that it was better to deal with village leaders (Ijaradars and Head Ryots), ordered a permanent village settlement in 1812.[2] However, the necessary detailed information on resources and productivity and the means to obtain an equitable agreement with each village were wanting. While the three-year settlement continued, Oakes was told to find out whether a decennial village lease or an annual ryotwari settlement would be preferable to the Ryots. On the basis of Oakes's reply, a seven year village settlement was ordered two months later.[3]

Meanwhile, the argument over the respective merits of the various systems had been going on in Madras and in London with the ryotwari system making a steady headway. Because no proper survey had yet been made in Paland, because its productivity was undependable, and because the Ryots preferred the village system, the Madras authorities tried to dissuade the Court of Directors from the application of the ryotwari system to this hilly tract. In this they failed.[4] Final orders on the ryotwari policy were sent to Oakes late in 1818.[5] The arrival of Thomas Munro as Governor of Madras in 1820 assured the future of this policy, but did not greatly hasten its practical application.

The new system was based on executive orders rather than on

[1] Gordon Mackenzie, *A Manual of Kistna District* (Madras: 1883), pp. 151–62. The whole settlement history of Palnad was reviewed by the Board in their letter to Oakes, 3 March 1814, *GDR* (967: 172–227). Oakes went over it again in his letter of 25 October 1814, *GDR* (983: 519 ff.).

[2] BOR to Oakes, 24 March 1812, *GDR* (964: 1–114), a long treatment on the subject of comparative land systems.

[3] BOR to Oakes, 8 December 1814, *GDR* (968: 164–90).

[4] BOR to Oakes, 12 February and 25 March 1816, *GDR* (971: 67–102: 170–238). The Board's letter of 3 March 1814, expressed similar intentions and gave somewhat similar instructions.

[5] BOR to Oakes, 21 September 1818, *GDR* (976: 366–431).

legislative enactment for its authority. Its application depended upon administrative efficiency. Whenever a village contract (*darkhast*) or a zamindari title (*sanad*) lapsed, *pattas*, which were statements of fact, were given to individual Ryots obliging them to pay so much money on each plot of ground. Only the money value attached to the known productivity of each piece of land was to remain permanent. The privilege of cultivating that land, which was called a 'right' , was heritable, saleable, but also relinquishable on a year to year basis. At the time of settlement (*jamabandi*), the Ryot decided if he would take a piece of land for the coming year. If he failed to pay, he lost his privilege. Sometimes he could be challenged for his privileged tenure. Such practices as joint-pattas, patta-subdivisions among family members or among sub-tenants, special remissions and privileges, and even payment in grain were variants of the system which might be found. Essentially, the old *makta-visabandi* agreement with each community of the village was involved. Each patta was recorded with the village officers and each payment was made to and accounted as received by the village officers.[1]

The formal introduction of the ryotawri system carried out after the seven-year village leases expired in 1821 foreshadowed what was to be the major problem, namely, the disparity between policy and practice.[2] Even after receiving his final orders, Oakes had protested that the village leaders preferred the old system.[3] On the Board's advice, he accepted the land values and soil classifications of the village leases as correct.[4] Village rents were merely divided up among the Ryots. Ryots were made answerable to the

[1] B. H. Baden-Powell, *Manual of Land Revenue Systems and Land Tenures in British India* (Calcutta: Government Press, 1882), pp. 654–8. Walter Elliot, 'Correspondence relating to Ryotwar, etc.', pp. 77–95 of *Elliot MSS.* (IOL: Eur. MSS. D. 330). These are copies of official records dating between 1825 and 1837, with two excellent entries by Indian officers (Nos. 4 and 5). Finally, 'Teloogoo Kyfeyet from Rayats of certain villages in Paloor Tanah . . . with modes of Revenue Settlement', Appendix B of *Goldingham Report, MRP* (280: 7: 2587 ff.), No. 30 of 16 April 1841.

[2] A. J. Arbuthnot, *Selections from Minutes and Other Official Writings of . . . Thomas Munro* (Madras: Madras University, 1917): 'On Relative Advantages of Ryotwar and Zamindari Systems', pp. 84–102: 'The Principle of the Ryotwar System', 15 April 1812, pp. 107 ff. While it is not our purpose to discuss the merits of this system, Eric Stokes's *The English Utilitarians in India* (Oxford, 1959), pp. 83–108, is particularly good on assessment theory.

[3] BOR to Oakes, 10 May 1819, *GDR* (977: 320 ff.).

[4] BOR to Oakes, 31 July 1820, *GDR* (3958: 37–45).

Collector through the village officers instead of through the Renters. A formal statement was then issued by the Board of Revenue declaring that all of the necessary steps had been taken with the consent of the Ryots and that the work was to be commended 'as a model for other districts'.[1]

Within two years, John Whish reported that all of this work had been done by the villagers themselves and that it was naturally satisfactory to the village leaders. He could find no persons answering the description of village Headmen other than the Karnams. The Karnams had formerly acted as the Ijaradars; moreover, they now fulfilled practically the same functions through their handling of village accounts: 'The Curnums . . . are by no means men . . . of correct, clear, and fixed ideas . . . and their views of things are in the same degree loose and not to be depended upon.'[2] From an administrative point of view, the work of the Karnams was 'most shameful', 'next to useless', and 'calculated to mislead'.[3]

It is clear, therefore, that the results of the ryotwari system, as it was applied in Palnad and in such zamindari villages as came under amani management, were almost negligible. Although revenue had increased almost fourfold in Palnad under the village system —probably due largely to the establishment of peace and security —revenue did not increase any further under the new system.[4] No appreciable change occurred in leadership and control at the village level. By implication, the new system meant to extend Government control past the village leadership to the more lowly cultivators; but the term 'ryot' was not defined carefully enough. Instead of lowly ryots gaining and maintaining an independent status, the old leading Ryots continued to dominate through pattas and village machinery what they had formerly held on village leases. Since they themselves compiled or at least influenced the compiling of data on productivity and since no systematic survey was made by the Government,[5] these leaders were not only

[1] BOR to Oakes, para. 4, 23 March 1821, *GDR* (3958: 312–22).
[2] Whish to BOR, 9 June 1823, *GDR* (3979: 134–64). BOR to Whish, 12 August 1823, *GDR* (341–80). GOM's views, 14 October 1823, *GDR* (3962: 475–9).
[3] Whish to BOR, para. 5, 2 December 1822, Appendix D of *Elliot Report*, *MRP* (281: 21: 8146).
[4] Goldingham to Cotton, para. 5, 13 December 1839, *MRP* (281: 6: 2459), No. 30 of 16 April 1841.
[5] Whish to BOR, 9 June 1823, *GDR* (3979: 134–64). (Reprint 124 1–10.)

able to preserve a moderate assessment but they were able to weight it unequally against alien or dissident elements within their villages. The only real threat to their position came from inquisitorial hosts of district officials who, if given a chance, would have preyed upon the very vitals of prosperity just as the zamindari servants were doing; however, here the traditional village defences mentioned earlier were aided somewhat by the vigilance of the Collector.[1]

The steady and strong hands kept on the amani administration by Thomas Oakes and John Whish gave a greater impetus to the rise of British authority in the district than any quality inherent in the systems of revenue settlement which were employed. The welfare of the people was the pivot on which success turned under any system. The fact that Oakes and, to a greater degree, Whish took a deep interest in the welfare of the people and kept sharp eyes on local affairs was a singificant factor in forestalling a deterioration in local government similar to what was occurring in the zamindaris.[2]

In summary two main lines of policy were explicitly followed by the British in Guntur between 1800 and 1837. The zamindari policy was a course of action in which former hereditary district leaders, Maratha Brahmans and high-caste Sat-Sudras, were confirmed in a quasi-baronial status on the condition that they would pay a tribute representing a third of the productivity of their lands. Whether, in the case of Guntur, this course of action was motivated by a recognition of legitimate power over the district from which certain rights arose or whether it was prompted by other motives is difficult to determine.

The second major course of action was the ryotwari policy. This system attempted exactly the opposite of the zamindari system. Instead of delegating a large amount of control to autonomous agents, the ryotwari system attempted to extend State control into every corner of agricultural life. Here again, all the

[1] J. B. Norton, *A Letter to Robert Lowe on the Condition and Requirements of Madras Presidency* (Madras: Pharoah & Co., 1854), pp. 178–9.

[2] *Goldingham Report* to Cotton, para. 8, 13 December 1839, *MRP* (280: 6: 2461), No. 30 of 16 April 1841. *Note:* Oakes was finally removed from Guntur for allowing his Sheristadar to accept a gift from the dying Malraju V. Gunda Rao and for having received a loan from this Zamindar. See Arbuthnot, op. cit. pp. 521–7; and BOR to John Whish, 7 December 1824, *GDR* (3963: 17–22).

motives which gave rise to this policy, whether arising from a recognition of the rights of individual cultivators or from a realistic assessment of the requirements of government, are difficult to determine and are not the theme of this study.

What is important to observe is that there was a distinct difference between the explicitly declared policies and the actual courses which were followed. Both the zamindari and the ryotwari courses of action were severely qualified and limited by each local situation insomuch that they lost much of their character. Policies were blunted by local influences and neither zamindari nor ryotwari fully came into operation.

The type of revenue system which prevailed was greatly influenced by the way in which villages were constituted—their institutions, their leadership, their customs. These villages, after all, were the social organizations which were 'really at the bottom of all revenue systems'.[1] If the British settled with the Zamindar, he still had to cope with the villages. If the Zamindar settled with the Ijaradar, this person still had to cope with his village or villages. One village might be a privileged *agraharamu* dominated by one Brahman family. Another might be dominated by a coalition of Brahmans and Rajus, or Brahmans and Kammas, and so on. A third village might be a *pallem* for outcastes (*panchamas*), such as Malas and Madigas. A large, old, and powerful village might control many smaller satellite hamlets while a poorer, smaller village might have trouble fending off outside forces. The Karnam and/or Head Ryot (Headman) might be the sole power or he might have to negotiate with a junta, either within his family or among the leading communities. The Karnam might be a stranger, an enemy, or a new force called in to tip the balance of local politics. The settlement might be made with one person claiming to hold the village or with several claiming to hold the village jointly. In each case, the village as a vital entity was the determining factor; but no two cases were exactly alike. Diversity rather than flat uniformity characterized the villages.

There is no evidence to show that the village system of revenue administration was seriously impaired either in Palnad or in Guntur proper prior to 1837. The ryotwari system operated more at the level of names and forms than in practice and actuality. The

[1] Baden-Powell, op. cit. Book IV, Chapter 3, 'The Revenue System of Madras', p. 642.

Ryots who contracted for the revenue were village leaders and not the lowly, labouring cultivators (ryots). Under both zamindari and amani management, arrangements were made locally on an *ad hoc* basis, with rents and joint-rents, pattas and joint-pattas being concluded for each village. The zamindari system also operated more in name than in truth after 1817.

Thus, at their respective levels, amani prevailed over zamindari and gramawari, over ryotwari.

Commenting upon the confusing dilemmas of policy which resulted, John Goldingham remarked (in 1838): 'In revenue matters, it is a long time before the mind will receive an impression of the truth. And this because so many are engaged in keeping up the worst state of management that a considerable mental effort is necessary to detail and lay aside representations which are presented in a plausible shape and sanctioned by custom.'[1] All villages of course tried to conceal information concerning themselves as a defence against extortion and ruin. Zamindari villages, however, seem to have fared somewhat worse than those directly under the Government.

[1] Goldingham to Cotton, para. 67, 13 December 1839, *MRP* (280: 7: 2511), No. 30 of 16 April 1841. Appended to this report on the social and economic condition of the district are seven reports from influential communities. That of S. V. K. Rao is more detailed than Goldingham's (though perhaps not as reliable).

VI

DISTRICT ORGANIZATION: THE HEADQUARTERS, 1837

TRADITIONALLY, the 'presence' of supreme authority wore a mantle of divinity. All who dwelled within the shadow of his umbrella gave proper reverence and deference, offerings and gifts. Under the British, the *huzur* was the level at which the will of the State and authority over the district met and formed a single institution. Indeed, it was one person. It was the foreign ruler, The Collector and Magistrate, who was informally known as 'The Collector' or 'The Huzur'. Yet, the aura of the *huzur* also enveloped all European officers (as well as non-official Europeans) in Guntur and spread over the entire headquarters establishment (*cutcherry*) of the district. In this sense, the Huzur was commonly the Place where the Huzur as a Person resided.

The tradition of a unified *huzur* was modified in the massive foundations laid by Lord Cornwallis. Separation of power was permanently built into district administration. Governmental power was divided into revenue, magisterial and judicial branches. Since no provision was made for a completely separate executive, magisterial power was merged either with revenue or with judicial power. With the ascendancy of the Munro system in Madras, the sword was taken from the District Judge and given to the District Collector.

The Huzur was the pivot for all State concerns in the district and the guardian of welfare and safety for its people. He had authority over 'all persons employed in the executive administration of the revenue and persons paying revenue or concerned with revenue'.[1]

[1] BOR *Proceedings* of 19 September 1836, para. 8, *MRP* (MRO: 1522: 12863–85). Regulation II of 1803.

Wherever land was not permanently settled, 'the Collector [determined] the demand annually upon occupied land',[1] collected instalments of revenue (*kists*) according to crop and marketing seasons, and recovered unpaid amounts from previous seasons. He was responsible for the survey and assessment of all land. He collected sea and land customs, liquor and drug excises, personal and professional taxes, profits from salt and tobacco monopolies, and proceeds from licences, stamp paper and other miscellaneous sources. He managed all State property, buildings, and endowments and he took care of property for disqualified owners.[2]

The Collector was Magistrate and Superintendent of Police.[3] It was his responsibility to keep the peace, to enforce the law, and to prosecute offenders. He could give sentences of up to two years confinement or hard labour, Rs. 1,000 in fines, and whipping. He also possessed special judicial powers for trying and punishing officers under his authority.[4]

In general administration, the Collector was responsible for agricultural and commercial prosperity, for education, for health, for postal services, *dak* bungalows and *choultries* (rest houses), and for roads, bridges, dams, canals and other engineering works. Hardly a thing happened in the district which did not concern him, whether it was a storm, an epidemic, a famine, an economic decline, or an outbreak of thugi and *dacoity*.

All that the Collector did, however, required approval and confirmation from the Board of Revenue, the Government, and such other central departments as were concerned. The Collector was District Treasurer and as such was subject to the orders of the Account-General. Although there were regular and special authorizations for disbursements on ordinary and regular or other accounts, no changes in these could be made without going through proper channels for sanction. No more than Rs. 20 could

[1] BOR *Proceedings* of 19 September 1836, paras. 8–9, Regulation XXVII of 1802.

[2] ibid. *Note:* Under the Board of Revenue, he was Superintendent of Stamps, Court of Wards, Public Works Officer, and agent for many other offices. Another generation passed before the Superintendent of Survey and the Director of Settlement sent officers periodically into Guntur.

[3] Not until 1858 did he answer to the Inspector General of Police.

[4] BOR *Proceedings*, paras. 8–9, 19 September 1936, *MRP* (MRO: 1522: 12874 ff.). J. Boswell, *A Manual of Nellore District* (Madras, 1873), pp. 558–66.

be spent for contingencies without previous sanction from Madras.[1]

In personnel selection and removal, the Collector could appoint all the Indian officers in his administration with the exception of the Huzur Sheristadar, whom he could nominate. He could dismiss all officers below the rank of Tahsildar. Officers of the Tahsildar cadre could not be removed without specific authorization from the Board of Revenue.[2]

The real danger was over-centralization. In a vast territory of 132,000 square miles, more than 1,000 miles long, with roughly 1·5 million Ryots paying over 3 crores in land revenue to twenty Collectors, the Board of Revenue could try to do too much. Collectors whose districts were three and four times the size of districts in other parts of India were already hard pressed. Excessive interference from Madras could paralyse their efforts. It usually took twenty years to become a full Collector and much longer to be promoted into the extremely limited number of senior positions in Madras; therefore, aspiring officers in the *mufassal* needed to toe the line. The Board of Revenue could keep a tight hold on the purse and on the appointment or removal of senior Indian officers, effectively controlling district police and revenue personnel. Not only were Collectors' orders appealable, but the Board of Revenue was the channel of communication for subjects of every description, whether legislative, police, fiscal, sanitary, agricultural or anything else. The Board had to pronounce with authority on land tenures of exceeding complexity and variety. How the Board could minutely supervise distant districts and give clear and knowledgeable opinions and instructions on all these subjects, how it could even cope with thousands of letters and appeals, is difficult to comprehend. The answer is that it simply could not. The Board of Revenue was continually faced with a backlog of business with which it could not cope.[3]

The remedy for this evil was for the Madras authorities to allow the Collector to exercise greater discretion and responsibility. Boards and Councils were slow and cumbrous machines for arriving at decisions. A trusted Collector, given proper powers

[1] BOR *Proceedings*, 19 September 1836, ibid. [2] ibid.

[3] BOR *Proceedings*, paras. 1–7, 19 September 1836, *MRP* (MRO: 1522: 12863–74). Rickets, *Report for Revision of Civil Salaries and Establishments*, I (Calcutta, 1858), pp. 161–5.

and some latitude, could often succeed when the Board was paralysed and the Government puzzled. When the Board of Revenue was filled with understanding members, supervision was kept to a minimum and, except in certain key subjects such as finance, the Collector was given some free rein.

Unfortunately, by 1837, effective control over Guntur District had been paralysed for several years. Guntur administration had been virtually headless. At a time when the district needed a strong, continuous and understanding *huzur*, when the land was ravaged by famine, cholera, and plague, there had been almost nothing. Without taking into account officers left temporarily in charge, between the departure of John Whish in July 1831, and the arrival of John Goldingham in July 1837, ten Acting Collectors (15 officers if those temporarily in charge are counted) shuttled in and out of Guntur. No single tenure was more than eleven months, the average being nearer four to five months per Collector (17 transfers occurred in 6 years). Worst of all, many of these Collectors were complete strangers in Telugu country.[1]

Obviously the enormous and variegated burden of responsibility for the welfare of the district was too heavy for any one man. The Collector was provided with a European staff to make up for what he lacked in energy and knowledge. This help was of two kinds: general and specialized.

Guntur as yet had no Sub-Collector; for although its revenue work was almost as much as in an 'unsettled' district, its administration, was still listed as 'settled' (*zamindari*). The Head Assistant had no particular assigned duty; but he was usually in charge of one or two Taluks in which he was responsible for the revenue, police, and general administration. Other Assistants were similarly employed; however, these could not be entrusted with a Taluk until after a year's residence in the district and until approved in Madras. Junior Assistants, usually young trainees just finished with their examinations in Madras, had no specific duty and were employed at the discretion of the Collector.[2]

[1] *Elliot Report*, para. 96, 17 April 1846, *MRP* (281:20:7635), No. 39 of 6 December 1847, 'Chart of Officers appointed Acting or Permanent to the office of Collector'. Gordon Mackenzie, *A Manual of the Kistna District* (Madras, 1883), p. 358.

[2] BOR *Proceedings*, para. 10, 19 September 1836, *MRP* (MRO: 1522: 12876). *Note:* Another generation passed before Sub-Collectors took over the Salt and Treasury Departments.

Promotion in the covenanted civil service was based primarily on seniority although, of course, it was also determined by available vacancies, recognized merit, and other intangibles and pressures common to the age. A Junior Assistant was eligible for active service only after he was pronounced fit to perform official duties in one or two vernacular languages. If he failed to qualify, he was removed into the *mufassal* (interior) on college allowance to work under a Collector until either he became fit or was forced to quit the service. An officer qualified as a Head Assistant or a Sub-Collector as soon as he was pronounced fit for service; he qualified as a Collector after four years and as a Principal Collector afer seven years of service although, as already noted, one rarely became a Collector in under twenty years. A Collector could be promoted to Principal Collector according to his merit and seniority without reference to the district in which he served; however, Guntur rarely rated a Principal Collector while Cuddapah and Tanjore were almost invariably so favoured.[1]

It was not until after India came under the Crown that the really significant multiplication of special officers took place. These specialized officers, although under the general direction of the Collector, were responsible to their special departments in Madras.[2] In 1837, Guntur had only two special officers: a surgeon and an engineer.

The medical officer who helped the Collector was usually an army surgeon attached to the local battalion. Due more to lack of facilities than to lack of desire, medical service was restricted primarily to government employees. Not until 1846 was the

[1] BOR *Proceedings*, paras. 10–11, 19 September 1836, *MRP* (MRO: 1522: 12876). *Note:* Principal Collectors received Rs 36,000 per annum; Collectors, Rs 30,000; Sub-Collectors, Rs 14,000; Head Assistants, Rs 8,800 or 6,700 depending on whether they had six years experience (3 years in revenue work was compulsory). Juniors got Rs. 350 or 260 per mensem depending on their language ability. Tent and per diem allowances were generous; and house-rent was provided. John Goldingham received a total of Rs 52,000 per year. Record lists of *Madras Civil Servants* (IOL: vol. 1–7) give all details on this and show that Guntur did not enjoy Principal Collectors often.

[2] C. D. Maclean, *Standing Information regarding the Official Administration of Madras Presidency in Each Department* (Madras, 1877). *Note:* (1) District post was strictly official until 1846 and was merged with general post in 1854, the Collector retaining control under the Postmaster-General. (2) Thomas Munro made the Collector responsible to the Board of Public Instruction; but no progress came until the Education Department was formed in 1855. (3) Although proposed as early as 1834, Registrars responsible to the Inspector-General of Registration did not come until 1864.

choultry, built from the bequest of John Whish, turned into a hospital (*lungarkhana*) for the general public. The District Surgeon, assisted by a small establishment of Indian dressers, vaccinators, and helpers, cared for the needs of the administration.[1]

The first engineers and surveyors in Guntur were also army officers. Lieutenant F. Mountford produced the first accurate map of the district in 1817. In 1837, the Department of Public Works, which was then under the Board of Revenue, was divided into four divisions within the Presidency. Each Division had a Civil Engineer and between one and three Assistant Civil Engineers. The Civil Engineer—there was at least an Assistant in Guntur for several months in each year—drew up plans, made estimates, and ascertained the correctness of bills for engineering works. Projects were executed through the local Maramat Department (Public Works) under orders from the Collector.[2]

When it was noticed that all through the worst months of great famine of 1833, the Krishna river was three-quarters full, preliminary steps were taken to follow up suggestions first advanced in 1792 for the irrigation of the delta. Captain Buckle was assigned to investigate the possibilities and to begin some smaller irrigation works. The Pulleru canal, a cut about 15 miles long able to pass 34 million cubic yards of water, was opened in 1837. Buckle advocated an ambitious project of throwing a dam across the river and then building an extensive network of canals sufficient to irrigate the entire delta. The magnitude of the cost of this project would have been enough, if accurately estimated, to have terrified the Government and the Directors. Thirteen more years were to pass before the plan was sanctioned.[3]

Under the Sadr Faujdari Adalat (Criminal High Court of Appeal) and under the Sadr Diwani Adalat (Civil High Court of Appeal), the judicial administration of the Presidency was divided into four territorial (*mufassal*) divisions. Guntur was within the Northern Division and was under the jurisdiction of a Provincial Court of Circuit which kept its headquarters at Masulipatam. Under the Provincial Court and subject to its control was the Zillah Court.

[1] George Evans Edgcome, who had been Assistant Civil Surgeon in Guntur since 1829, was replaced by Edward Smith in 1837. The Huzur also had a 1st class Native Dresser at Rs 35 a month and a 2nd class at Rs 28. BOR to Collector, 20 June 1837 *GDR* (5368: 188: 226–7).

[2] BOR *Proceedings*, 19 September 1836, *MRP* (MRO: 1522: 12876 ff.).

[3] Mackenzie, op. cit. pp. 252–9.

In 1837, the Zillah Judge possessed very limited power. All suits above the value of Rs. 5,000 were within the original jurisdiction of the Provincial Court as also were all punishments exceeding ten years imprisonment with hard labour and thirty stripes with a rattan. For this reason, he tended to be identified with the *huzur* in much the same manner as the European subordinates of the Collector. His appearance of being lower than the Collector was somewhat changed by the reforms of 1843. As reconstituted at that time, the Civil and Sessions Judge was given all of the power formerly held by the Provincial Court (which was abolished) . . . namely, unlimited civil jurisdiction and power to punish criminals with up to fourteen years imprisonment and thirty-nine stripes. These powers were not modified until the Indian Penal Code came into force in 1860.[1]

Below the Zillah Judge, who was usually an Acting Assistant Judge and Joint Criminal Judge (Edward Newberry was the third to hold the post in 1837.), were two separate hierarchies reflecting the dual nature of the judiciary. In criminal justice, there were three grades of magisterial courts. Covenanted Europeans were of the first grade; Tahsildars were of the second grade (six months imprisonment, a Rs. 200 fine, and whipping); and Taluk Sheristadars or Deputy Tahsildars were of the third grade (one month imprisonment and a Rs. 50 fine). The lowest level of officers vested with criminal powers were 'the heads of villages called Village Munsifs'.[2] Under Regulation XI of 1816, these officers were empowered to put offenders in the village choultry for twelve hours and put low-caste offenders in the stocks for not more than six hours. In civil justice, there were at least three levels of adjudication below the Zillah Judge. In Guntur Town there was an Auxiliary (Subordinate) Court presided over by a Principal Sadr Amin which, established in 1827 to assist the Zillah Judge, had much the same civil jurisdiction as the Zillah Court. Next, there were District Munsifs' Courts, usually at every taluk headquarters, with power to decide cases involving up to Rs. 1,000 and final jurisdiction in suits of up to Rs. 20. Finally, under Regulation IV of 1816, the head of a village was *ex officio* Village Munsif with

[1] Boswell, op. cit. pp. 558–9, 566. F. J. Richards, *Madras District Gazetteers: Salem*, I–Pt. II (Madras, 1918), pp. 81–88. F. R. Hemingway, *Madras District Gazetteers: Godavari* (Madras: 1915), pp. 188–9: Maclean, op. cit. pp. 183–95.

[2] Maclean, op. cit. pp. 187, 194.

power to decide on personal property of up to Rs. 10 value without appeal and up to Rs. 100 in the character of an arbitrator. Panchayats could decide on suits without any value limitation (Reg. V of 1816); moreoever, the Collector could summon Village and District Panchayets to settle disputes.[1]

The *Cutcherry* at Guntur was the nerve centre of district administration. The headquarters office—actually a labyrinth of offices in several buildings connected by passage-ways and verandahs—was the continuing expression if not the essential hub of district power. The Cutcherry was the instrument which received and transmitted communications, which digested, recorded, and preserved information, and which conveyed and implemented decisions from above and channelled or resolved disputes and petitions from below. The entire fiscal, police, and general administration was organized within its departments.

If the Cutcherry served as the transmission between the processes of decision-making and wheel-turning, it was the Sheristadar who served as the clutch for engaging these two mechanisms. As has already been seen, he was the direct descendant of the former Desmukh, Diwan, and Dubash. His official position was summarized by the Board of Revenue in 1836 as follows:

> The Principal Native Revenue Officer under the Collector is the Head Sheristadar. He superintends every department and is the general inspector and controller of accounts. He is usually consulted by the Collector on every question connected with the administration of the revenue and particularly in the annual settlement; and the orders of the Collector for guidance of the subordinate executive Officers are generally passed after discussion with him. He has no independent functions or authority but acts always in the name and under the authority of the Collector. His salary on his first appointment in a settled District is 60 [Rs. 210] and in an unsettled District 80 Pagodas [Rs. 280] per mensem which is increased according to length of service until after 20 years it amounts to 125 in the former and 200 Pagodas [Rs. 700] in the latter.[2]

Although merely a ministerial officer and office manager, 'the enormous and multifarious duties' which overwhelmed the

[1] Boswell, op. cit. pp. 558–66. The Zillah Court convened three times a week.
[2] BOR *Proceedings*, para. 10, 19 September 1836, *MRP* (MRO: 1522: 12880–5).
Note: This statement was taken from the Government Order of 22 March 1816.

Collector and the fact that a Sheristadar's tenure was usually 'much more permanent' than that of the Collector made the real position of the Sheristadar quite different from the ostensible one.[1] As chief repository of local history and conditions, as confidential adviser and indispensable right arm, as 'the sole channel of access to the Collector', this officer was accustomed to exercising a 'very great authority without any definite responsibility', and was 'in many respects, the real administrator'.[2] Collectors often 'avowedly devolved their whole revenue duties on their Sheristadars'.[3] A Government Order circulated by the Board of Revenue on 12 June 1851, clearly reflected the towering image which this officer had come to assume: 'That officer should be regarded as the Native Collector. All accounts should be open to his examination as to that of his European superior. The Board should make known to all Sheristadars that the Government will hold them responsible for every department and that it is their duty to place in writing all information of malpractice.'[4] Sheristadari control in the Madras Presidency, in the words of its critics, so effectively tied 'leading strings' on Collectors that little could be accomplished without the co-operation of the Sheristadar.[5]

The social composition of the upper stratas of district administration was clearly disclosed in the critical enquiry, 'Is there anything about Madras Collectorates that makes them so difficult that only a Maratha Brahmin can fathom it?'[6] Castes dominating the highest cadres of district administration in Madras Presidency, as of 22 January 1855, are revealed in the following table:

Caste	Head Sheristadars	Naib Sheristadars Deputy Collectors	Tahsildars	Total
Maratha Brahmans	17	20	117	154
Other Brahmans	2	13	68	83
Other Hindus	2	3	45	50
Native Christians	0	2	3	5
Muslims	0	0	13	13
Eurasians	0	0	0	0
Grand total	21	38	246	305

[1] Ricketts, op. cit. p. 333. [2] ibid. [3] ibid.

[4] ibid. p. 334. *Note:* Since 1940, the Personal Assistant ('P.A.') has supplanted the Sheristadar as the over-shadowing influence in the Cutcherry.

[5] ibid. pp. 324, 337. [6] ibid. p. 337.

Considering the already long tradition of dominance by a Desastha elite in Guntur,[1] it is hardly surprising that the Huzur Sheristadar was a Maratha Brahman.

In June 1836, Alexander Bruce reported that Ghanagam Sita Rama Rao Puntulu's health was failing and suggested that his good service should be recognized by an increase in salary and the provision of a special assistant. The salary increment scales of 1816 had been extended to Sheristadars of settled districts in 1828. Sita Ram had become Head Sheristadar on 8 June 1825 and should have received 10 pagodas-per-month increases in 1830 and 1835; however, he had been getting an extra Rs. 111 per month from the *zafted* (attached) zamindaris since 1832, giving him a total of Rs. 321 per month. Bruce felt that the Government should pay him Rs. 280 (80 pagodas) a month along with Rs. 2,940 in back pay and that Rs. 71 out of the Rs. 111 a month taken from the zamindaris should be used to support an assistant for the ailing Sheristadar.[2]

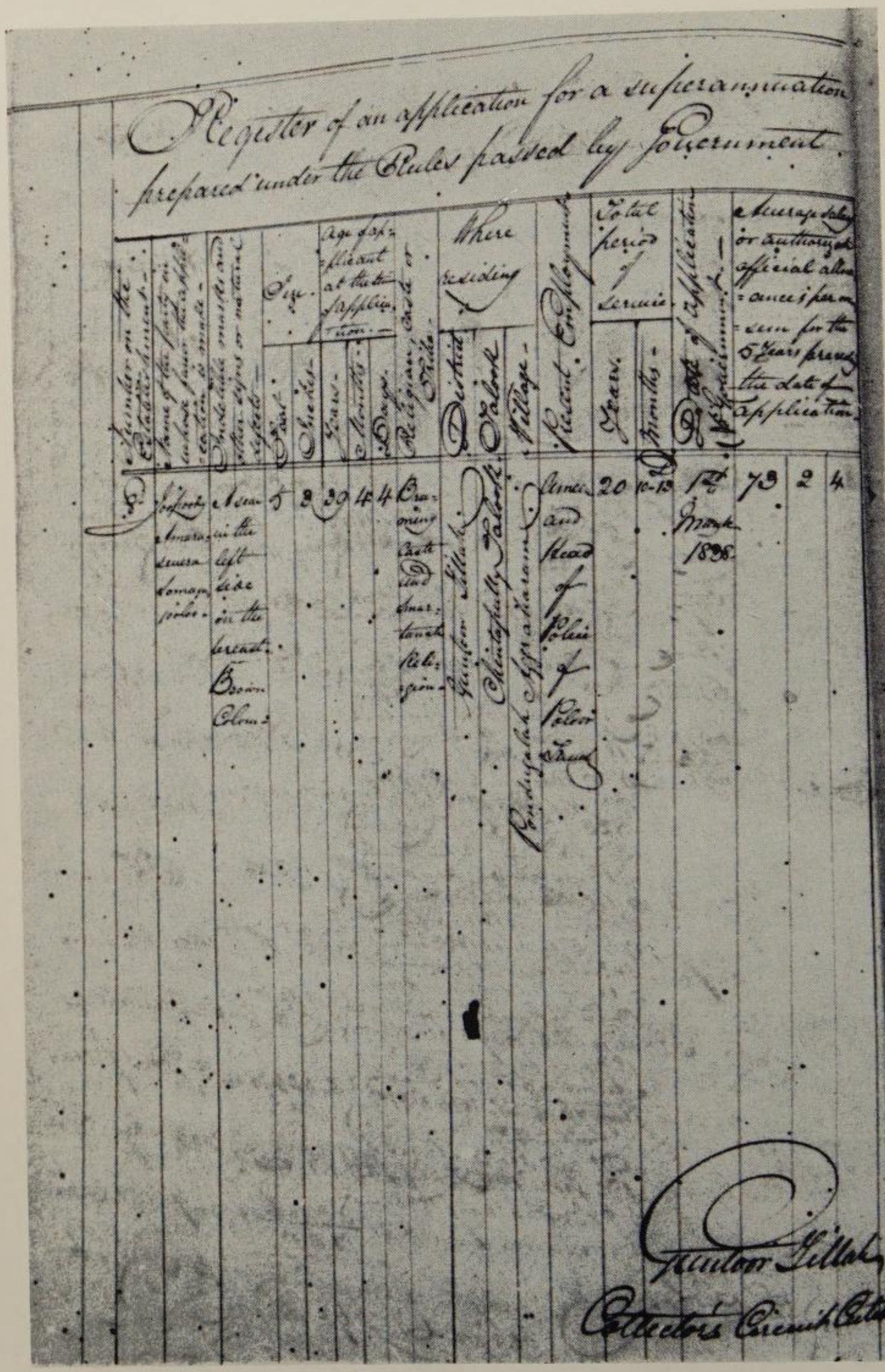
The assistant whom both Bruce and Sita Ram had in mind was Nyapati Shashagiri Rao. Born the year that the British came to Guntur and nurtured when Atturi Venkatachallam's power was at its zenith, Shashagiri Rao entered district service in 1810 (at the age of twenty-two). He became manager of the Magistrate Department in the early 1820's. Since his daughter was married to Sita Ram's son and since he was connected with both branches of the Manur Rao family, he was obviously a Desastha leader.[3] He was also closely associated with European superiors. With kindly interest John Whish warned him against attending 'god's feasts' given by the Sattanapalli Zamindar lest 'any indirect connexion with public business be inferred in the invitation'.[4] James Bell supplied him with English literature. Patrick Grant and A. S.

[1] Ricketts, op. cit. p. 335.

[2] Bruce to BOR, 10 June 1836, *GDR* (5392: 162–5); 8 July, ibid. pp. 222–5. *Note:* Salary scales as such need not concern us; however, they are included in Appendix I.

[3] White to BOR reporting the conduct of Shashagiri Rao, para. 67, 10 July 1845, *GDR* (5402: 129–30). Petition of N. Shashagiri Rao to Government, No. 75 of 23 December 1845, *MRP* (IOL: 280: 72: 7330–3). op. cit. Mackenzie, p. 350. *Note:* In talking with the present ex-Zamindar, I found that close connexions still exist between the Manur Rao and Nyapati families. From Nyapati Madhava Rau, ex-Diwan of Mysore, I learned that the family seat was in Chrebrole.

[4] Letters from John Whish, James Bell, Patrick Grant, A. S. Mathison and Malcolm Lewin to N. Shashagiri Rao, Enclosures 1 to 5 of No. 75 of 23 December 1845, *MRP* (IOL: 280: 72: 7335–45).



Register of a Pension Application, dated 20th March, 1838.

Pension from the Establishment of the Collector of Customs under date the 29th December 1835.—

Salary or annual allowance at the time of application	Nature of the Office held	Remarks by the Head of the Office	Proposed Amount of Pension for Retiring	Length of Service
80	Principal Collector	Assistant Landwaiter at Sligo from 21st April 1817 to 30th Sept 1818	1 5 10 14	24 6
		Do Do from 1st October 1818 to 31st July 1826	7 9 11 17 8	
		Chief Landwaiter at Do from 1st Aug 1826 to 19th October 1831	5 3 6 28	
		Sayer Watcher at Do from 20th October 1831 to 15th February 1833	1 2 27 35	
		Clerk in Charge Boatmen & Tidewaiter at Do from 16th February to 14th March 1833	1 7 0	
		Head Preventive at Do from 15th March to 13th December 1838	7 28 70	
		Do Do and Acting Gauger of Spirit Stock from the date to 16th December 1838	1 3 85	
		Gauger of Spirit Stock from 17th December 1838 to 24th May 1834	5 8 70	
		Acting Gauger and Keeper of Spirit & Tobacco Stock from 25th May to 6th July 1834	1 13 100	
		Gauger of Spirit Stock from 7th July 1834 to 31st January 1837	2 625 70	
		Do and Keeper of Spirit Do from 1st February 1837 to 28th February 1838	1 1 80	
			30 10 13	

Signed [illegible]

Mathison approved of him. Malcolm Lewin tried to take him to Cocanada and then helped him to become Huzur Sheristadar of Rajahmundry (in 1835). Less than a year later, Bruce wrote to him: 'I have considered how to create a suitable opening. Sita Ram is entitled to additional salary. As he needs help, he will forego this and I purpose making it over to you . . . lose no time in coming.'[1] Bruce even offered to write the Collector of Rajahmundry (Grant) if necessary.

Shashagiri Rao's moves at this time cannot be understood without reference to the factionalism then raging between contending groups of Maratha Brahmans. A friend who had been his predecessor in Rajahmundry was dismissed. Efforts to discredit him before Grant, who had approved of his work when in Guntur, were partially successful.[2] Lewin wrote to him that 'neither ability or exertion in any one man could compass such a system of scramble' as Rajahmundry District.[3] An opponent, Manganuri Lakshminarsu Rao, became Head Sheristadar of Rajahmundry immediately after Shashagiri Rao and helped to 'reform glaring abuses' in that district.[4] Sita Ram's poor health may have been only one reason for the needed assistance of Shashagiri Rao in Guntur. Certainly little time was wasted in abandoning a high position in Rajahmundry for a lower one in Guntur.

The quick return of Shashagiri Rao to Guntur was not viewed entirely with joy in Madras. His rapid switch in position was thought to be irregular. Lewin regretted the hasty resignation, feeling that Shashagiri Rao had not stayed in Rajahmundry long enough to have his worth appreciated.[5] Since, under a new policy being formulated in Madras, the Zamindars were to be reinstated as managers on behalf of the Government, the diminished amount of work in Guntur would make the employment of Shashagiri Rao difficult.[6]

[1] Bruce to Shashagiri Rao (from Bapatla), 7 June 1836, ibid.

[2] Grant to Bruce (through Shashagiri Rao), from Rajahmundry, 27 June 1836, ibid. enclosure 6.

[3] Lewin to Shashagiri Rao, from Mangalore, 9 July 1836, ibid. enclosure 8.

[4] Lakshminarsu Rao to Goldingham, 24 December 1841, *MRP* (MRO: 1850: 16999–17013), Appendix A in No. 27 of 10 February 1842. *Note:* Henry Montgomery, in his report on Rajahmundry of 14 March 1844, attributed the administrative failure and economic distress of the district to prolonged and bitter factionalism among district officers.

[5] Lewin to Shashagiri Rao, from Ootacamund, 14 September 1836, op. cit. enclosure 9.

[6] Bruce to Shashagiri Rao, from Madras, 21 Novemeber 1836, ibid. enclosure 10.

Bruce left Guntur to take up a new post in Madras before sanctions for the pay increase for Sita Ram and the special assistantship for Shashagiri Rao arrived.[1] In November he wrote from Madras:

> Your character is a sufficient guarantee that you will obtain employment in another Department in the Hoozoor. To me your qualifications are strictly public and of a high order. I intended to appoint you Sheristadar on anything happening to Seeta Rama Row. Your experience, sound judgement, ability and aptitude for business and your long tried fidelity are grounds on which I would have justified this choice—*in Guntoor especially*.[2]

Bruce went on to list cutcherry leaders to whom he wished to be remembered and ended his letter by crediting Shashagiri Rao with producing 'some of the very best Native Servants'.[3] The stage was thus set for one Desastha to succeed another in a carefully restricted preserve of administrative power.[4]

The structure of the District Cutcherry, the organization of its personnel into various departments, was large and complex. An attempt to reconstruct this organization from the materials at hand is complicated by the fact that a single coherent description was only rarely, if ever, given in writing and by the fact that the organization was constantly changing to meet expanding and contracting needs.

The central trunk of *cutcherry* organization was the Secretariat. Presumably because accounts occupied such an important position and because the Sheristadar exercised such vast power, the Secretariat kept the name of the office out of which it apparently grew. The *Sheristakhana* (*Sar-rishta-khana:* 'Chief-connecting-place') was much more than the Sherista (Native Accounts) Department. Indeed, it was the hub for five other secretarial departments. The six departments of the Secretariat were: (1) the Sherista

[1] Sanction for pay increase, 22 August 1836, *GDR* (3978: 583–5). Sanction for Assistant Sheristadar, 15 September 1836, *GDR* (3978: 681).

[2] Bruce to Shashagiri Rao, from Madras, 21 November 1836; *MRP* (IOL: 280: 72: 7338), enclosure 10 in No. 75 of 23 December 1845.

[3] ibid. p. 7339.

[4] A revealing glimpse of a Desastha's climb to power can be seen in V. V. G. Row's *The Life of Vennelacunty Soob Row* (Madras: C. Forester & Co., 1873). See also Ruthnaswamy, *Some Influences that made the British Administrative System in India* (London: Luzac, 1939), pp. 87 ff.

Department, (2) the Munshi (Native Correspondence) Department, (3) the English (Accounts and Correspondence) Department, (4) the Treasury, (5) the Record Office, and (6) the Sadarward (Material Maintenance) Department. As can be seen, this central trunk of departments served as the exchange between Telugu and English and as the junction between local and central administration.[1] Marathi was the vehicle of this exchange.

Beneath the Secretariat, departments were organized roughly into three branches. First, the revenue branch was divided functionally between land revenue (*mahasulu*) and other revenues (*sayaru*). One department drew together all the land revenue accounts from the field (*ghaibatu*) departments, whether from the zamindaris or from the taluks. Usually there was one Maddatgar in this department for each zamindari or one Maddatgar (Clerk)

CHART 1: THE LADDER OF AUTHORITY

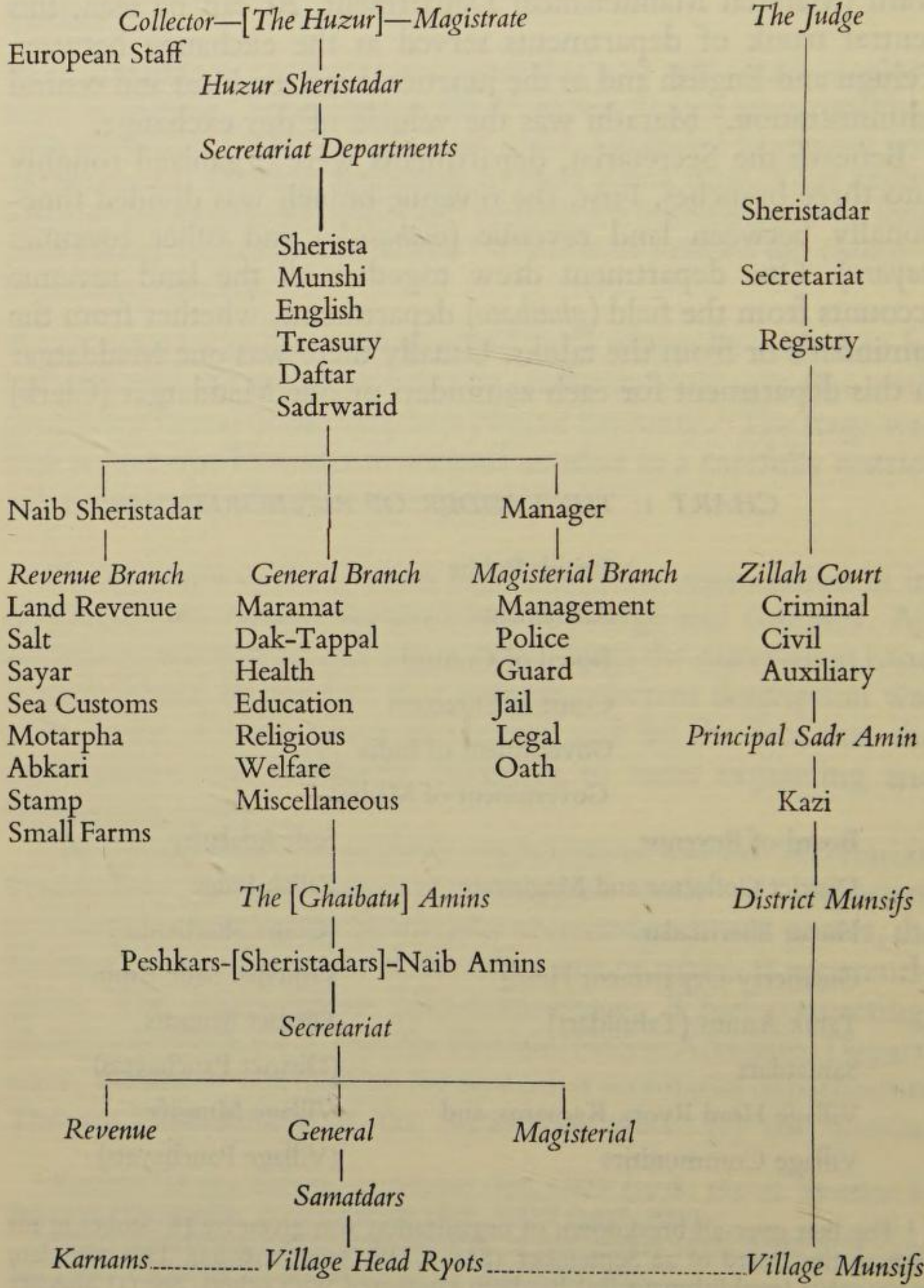
British Public
Parliament
Board of Control
Court of Directors
Government of India
Government of Madras

Board of Revenue	Sadr Adalat(s)
District Collector and Magistrate	Zillah Judge
Huzur Sheristadar	(Court Sheristadar)
Cutcherry Department Heads	Principal Sadr Amin
Taluk Amins (Tahsildars)	District Munsifs
Samatdars	(District Panchaytas)
Village Head Ryots, Karnams, and Village Communities	Village Munsifs (Village Panchayats)

[1] The best over-all breakdown of organization was given by H. Stokes in his letter to the Board of 22 September 1854, *GDR* (5409: 216–25). This complete *muain-zabita* (establishment list) has been compared with others. See (1) Sherista Department, 1 September 1836, *GDR* (5392: 249); (2) Treasury, 23 April 1836, *GDR* (5392: 129); general, 13 June 1836, *GDR* (5392: 166–73); and also general, 24 May 1841, *GDR* (5372: 213–15, 521–32). *Note:* See Appendix I for a full breakdown of each department with monthly salaries.

CHART 2:

THE STRUCTURE OF DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION



Note: There was a department or an assignment of personnel for each subject.

for every one or two taluks. Depending upon the amount of work required, the other revenue departments were usually comprised of a Peshkar, two Maddatgars, and a Jawabnavis (Munshi). Only the Land Revenue and Salt Departments rated English Writers. Second, the police branch consisted of one department, almost always located in a separate building, which was divided functionally into several sections . . . e.g., the secretariat, enforcement, guard, jail, oath administering, and legal sections. Finally, the general service branch was so embryonic that often, instead of having regular departments carrying on regular programmes, there were only problems or subjects which were assigned by the Collector or Sheristadar. The Public Works (*Maramat*) Department, the District Post (*Dak* and/or *Tappal*) Department, and the Health Department possessed regular establishments. Such questions as (1) Education, (2) Religious Institutions, (3) Statistics, (4) Welfare, and (5) Arms were regularly and sometimes exhaustively dealt with even though there was no specific machinery for handling them.[1] (See Appendix I for a full break-down of each department.)

Entry into the district service was usually through family and caste connexions.[2] At the age of ten or twelve, after five years of learning the Hindu epics and simple arithmetic, a boy would become a volunteer in an office where some friend or relative of his family worked. Here he would labour for several years until his skill in writing and accounting, his knowledge of departmental and governmental affairs, and his personal influence were sufficient to put him on the pay-roll at Rs. 4 or 5 a month. Depending upon his caste, his connexions, and his department,[3] a person's rise in the service was determined largely by patronage, nepotism, the manipulation of influence (including money), and outright intrigue. The number of highly paid positions being very limited and the number of able officers being very plentiful, an aspiring

[1] Since citations on each of these departments or subjects would be exhausting and pointless, only one example—the District Dak (Post)—will be given. See BOR to Collector, 5 March 1838, *GDR* (5369: 135–75); and Collector to BOR, 20 June 1838, *GDR* (5394: 149–53).

[2] Occasionally a European adopted and educated an orphan.

[3] The level at which a person entered district service and his scope for advancement was somewhat determined by the caste stratification noted earlier. Strong preserves of interest and patronage were held by each leading community. While these over-lapped at different levels, each group tended to predominate at a given level.

officer usually needed more than administrative skills if he were to succeed to the post of the incumbent above him.[1]

If an aspirant were a Telega, a Kamma, or a Muslim, he would be lucky to get into the Huzur at all. Mostly high-caste (Clean) Sudras tended to be in police work and, therefore, strived for Aminships. The same was true of Muslims, except that they were not averse to handling money and, hence, also competed with Komartis in treasury work. If an aspirant were a Niyogi Brahman, he had a good chance of entering some department of the Huzur simply by the numerical strength of his caste; however, the large majority of Niyogis were dominant at the level of Karnamships and Samatdarships (close to the villages). Even some Maratha Brahmans, outside the circle of entrenched leadership in Guntur, would have trouble getting into the inner sanctum of the secretariat (sherista) departments.

A son from one of the 'chosen few' among Guntur families would probably become a volunteer within one of the English departments having already had some private tutoring in English. As his skill and experience grew, a young Desastha and his family would scan far and wide among the cutcherries of South India for some maternal uncle or paternal cousin or suitable marriage which would advance the position of the young officer. As each position was attained, favours would be bought and sold in an attempt to climb higher. As the top of the district pyramid was approached, struggles and intrigues would become more intense. It was practically impossible for a person to reach the top by himself. Only in combination with others could he hope to keep his place. Marathas jealously guarded the approaches to the highest offices in the Huzur Cutcherry.[2]

As years and success came to a district officer, thoughts would turn to providing for his family and for his eternal future. Notwithstanding orders from the Board of Revenue that land could

[1] An entertaining and revealing account of how this was done is found in Panchkouree Khan, *The Revelations of an Orderly* (Benares, 1848), any chapter.

[2] V. V. Gopal Row, *The Life of Vennelacunty Soob Row* (Madras: C. Forester & Co., 1873), pp. 1–30, 62–70. Soob Row died in 1837 after retiring from a full career in government service. In almost every district he visited, there was a cousin, an uncle, &c., who was Huzar Sheristadar, Head Munshi, Head English Accountant and so on. J. A. B. Dykes, *Salem: An Indian Collectorate* (London: W. H. Allen & Co, 1853), pp. 322, 327, confirms this view of Maratha strength. See also A. Prinsep, *The Baboo* (London, 1834), pp. 71, 289, 311, 40, 259.

not be purchased or possessed in the district where an officer was employed (unless with special permission),[1] he would covertly buy *inams*, usually *shrotriam* or *agraharam* villages near the customary family seat. A venerable old officer was one who saw all his sons and nephews into good positions, acquired and held inams, made loans, kept 'clubs' over his enemies, made pilgrimages to Benares, Conjivaram, Ramesvaram, and other sacred places, and, finally, grew stouter and stouter in his palankin as he was borne to the Cutcherry each month to sign for his pension and to renew his grip on local affairs.[2] (See sample of Pension Register.)

[1] Whish to BOR (on orders of 19 June 1826), 7 August 1826, *GDR* (3965: 345–8). D. White reported in 1845 that the orders were completely ignored.

[2] Rules of Pensions (22 December 1835), 3 February 1836, *Fort Saint George Gazette* (No. 450, pp. 73–76). An officer with twenty years service obtained a third and an officer with thirty years, a half of his average salary during the past five years (which had to be at least Rs 10 per mensem.)

VII

DISTRICT ORGANIZATION: THE FIELD OPERATIONS, 1837

JUST as *huzur* represented 'the presence' of supreme authority, so *ghaibatu* (or *mufassal*) stood for its absence.[1] In contradistinction to the headquarters in Guntur, *ghaibatu* was the term applied to field machinery and operations. The organization of the field (*ghaibatu*) departments was, if anything, more complicated than that of the headquarters. This was because the number, the name, the size, and the character of field divisions and functions tended to vary from year to year. The functions of government in the field at any particular time were constantly changing.

According to the map of 1827,[2] Guntur proper was comprised of 36 towns (*kasbas*), 846 primary villages, and 650 secondary villages or hamlets. Its territorial organization, built on relics of the fourteen *samutus* of ancient Kondavidu Sima (including Vinukonda and Bellamkonda) and on the five *parganas* (or zamindari tracts) of Murtajanagar Circar, possessed neither system nor coherence. Neither the *amani* or the *zamindari* units were compact. Jurisdictions over-lapped both functionally and territorially. Three zamindars had villages and even shared one village within the Kondavidu Samutu. An Amin often had to pass three or four villages of other Amins before coming to one of his own.[3]

Nevertheless, fourteen *taluks*,[4] sixteen if the divisions of Palnad

[1] *Ghaibatu:* lit., 'lost', 'hidden', or 'missing'. Wilson's *Glossary* . . .

[2] *Map of Guntoor Collectorate* (Madras, 1827), made in 1815–16 by military officers under the direction of Lieut. F. Mountford.

[3] Recommendations for territorial redistribution, Stokes to BOR, 25 May 1843, *GDR* (No. 44: 5402: 41–51).

[4] *Taluk:* originally meant nothing more than 'division' or 'dependence'. Ancient Hyderabad Records applied it to large provinces of the empire as well as to tiny parcels of ground. In Deccan idiom, *taluks* became district subdivisions, synonymous with parganas. *Tahsil*, literally a sheaf of village accounts, was rarely used.

are included, formed the most permanent elements of field (*ghaibatu*) administration. In addition to these, there were two stations strictly for police work and two stations for salt industry. Because Guntur was considered to be 'settled', all of these divisions and stations tended to be called *thanas* (stations) and their principal executive officers were usually called *Thanadars* or *Amins*, rather than *Tahsildars*.[1]

Because all of the zamindaris had come under government (*amani*) management, the machinery of the field (*ghaibatu*) divisions had become enlarged. Those Vasireddy villages which had not been under the Collector since 1821 because of the disputed succession, had been surrendered by Ramanadha Babu in 1833. The Repalli (Manika Rao) villages had been under the Collector as Court of Wards since 1828. The Malraju divisions and both branches of the Manur Rao holdings had been taken over (*zafted*) for non-payment of revenue during the famine.[2]

Whether he was a Police Amin or a Revenue Amin—a Thanadar or a Tahsildar—the Amin was one of 'the Native Collectors of Divisions called Talooks'.[3] Unless specifically limited to a single function, his responsibility was just as wide ranging and comprehensive as that of the Huzur Collector in Guntur. In return for the whole work of fiscal and criminal control, together with general services, his monthly remuneration ranged between Rs. 40 and Rs. 200 (settled districts, 40 to 100; unsettled districts, 100 to 200).[4]

A peculiarity of the Amin's pay in Guntur proper was the fact that nine out of fourteen of the Thanadars who were employed in revenue work were paid exclusively from the accounts of the zamindaris. Although the Government had originally pledged itself to keep the peace at no expense to the zamindars, this policy had not been practised. It was not until late in 1836, when the

[1] The fourteen thanas of Guntur proper are listed roughly as follows: (1) Guntur, (2) Kurupadi, (3) Chabrolu, (4) Tenali, (5) Rajapet, (6) Chilkalurpet (Kondavidu), (7) Mangalagiri, (8) Bapatla, (9) Repalli, (10) Rachur, (11) Satanapalli, (12) Bellamkonda, (13) Vinukonda, (14) Vunglapuram. The Palnad *thanas* were: (1) Dachapalli and (2) Tummurukota. The Salt Thanas were Chinna Ganjam and Nizampatam. Police stations were at Polur and Gurzala.

[2] A summary table of zamindari possession and attachment is found in Appendix C of *Goldingham's Report* to Cotton, 13 December 1839, *MRP* (281: 7: 2800), No. 30 of 16 April 1841.

[3] BOR *Proceedings*, para. 12, 19 September 1836, *MRP* (MRO: 1522: 12885).

[4] ibid. Also *Elliot Report*, para. 90, 17 April 1846, *MRP* (281: 20: 7632), No. 39 of 6 December 1847.

zamindars were being put in charge of their own estates as Amildars (see section below for fuller treatment of this subject), that Bruce's suggestion was followed. Thus, in 1837, the Amin was paid by the Government for the police share of his salary while the revenue share of his salary, paid out of zamindari accounts when these were under amani control, lapsed.[1]

An excellent description of the revenue duties of the Amin was given by Henry Newill, the Head Assistant Collector of Guntur between 1841 and 1850. It was the Amin's duty to (1) arrange for the occupation, relinquishment, and cultivation of lands under *hukums* (orders) from the Collector; (2) prepare the information and details for the *jamabandi* (annual settlement) under the control of the Huzur; (3) obtain rents for grazing and other item taxes; (4) supervise subordinates in field examinations, &c.; (5) dispose of complaint petitions preferred from below or referred from above; (6) examine the journals and accounts of each Village Karnam; (7) examine receipt books of individual ryots to see that Karnams properly entered payments; (8) prepare accounts for motarpha, sayar, abkari, and other revenues; (9) forward monthly, annual and jamabandi accounts to the Huzur according to prescribed forms; (10) remit the 'public revenue' with accounts monthly to the Huzur Treasury; (11) register all applications for planting *topus* (groves of trees) for charitable purposes and forward returns to the Collector; (12) superintend the arrangement and preservation of records in the Taluk Cutcherry; (13) examine persons receiving monthly pensions from the Taluk Treasury and forward accounts to the Huzur; (14) inspect the returns and test the work of vaccinators; (15) supervise stills and shops under abkari laws; (16) examine property tendered as security for Shroffs, Tahsildars, &c.; (17) forward applications for leave to the Huzur; (18) supervise the regulation of water from tanks and canals; (19) investigate and try cases of malversation by village and district officers (under Reg. IX of 1822 and Reg. VII of 1828); (20) report all lapsed inams; (21) settle all boundary disputes; (22) keep the Collector informed on general subjects; and finally (23) supervise the legal appropriation of *pagoda* or temple funds.[2]

[1] BOR *Proceedings* to Collector, No. 7 of 20 October 1836, *GDR* (5368: 9–13) and *MRP* (MRO: pp. 14211–16); and Nos. 3–4 of 21 November 1836, *MRP* (MRO: p. 16667).

[2] Ricketts, *Report of the Commissioner for the Revision of Civil Salaries and Establishments* (Calcutta, 1858), I, pp. 345–6.

The Amin was also Head of Police and Magistrate over his division. When the Company entered the country, it had eliminated the extortionate Poligars and Kavalgars and introduced Darogas under the control of the Zillah Judge (1802). As already explained in chapter V, the attempt to separate executive from revenue power and to impose an artificial system of legal procedures was a ruinous failure. The reforms of 1816 which were a central pillar of the Munro system, united thanadari and tahsildari powers as much as possible. Thereafter, the system was only slightly modified to meet local circumstances.[1]

A key administrative problem revolved around the efficiency and reliability of the Amin and the degree of support which he received from the Huzur. Munro constantly sought to defend this important officer from arbitrary treatment at the hands of the Collector. He used the case of a suspended Head Sheristadar in Tinnevelly to speak out generally against inquisitorial and harsh treatment of Native officers: 'Vigilance is one thing, habitual suspicion is another. Nothing so destroys confidence between [the Collector] and those who act under him . . . and obliges him to trust to designing strangers.'[2] In 1835, Collectors were again told that 'situations of trust and responsibility should be an object of ambition to the most meritorious' of Indians and that Tahsildars had a right to expect support for their 'arduous labours'.[3] There were some districts where no Tahsildar had held office for more than two years. The Government argued: 'If a system of such changes is once established, it throws all in disorder. It should be our aim to substitute permanency for what is capricious and uncertain. . . . Our interest is directly opposed to such a state of things. . . . We should counteract the evils of fluctuations in our European agency.'[4] The occasion of a new Collector coming to a district all too often caused general anxiety and incited factionalism among district officers.[5]

[1] Essentials of the Munro system as applied to Amins in Guntur are found in BOR to Lewin, 17 June 1834, *GDR* (3976–A: 463–78). *Note: Kavalis* were villages of robbers and thieves which blackmailed the country for abstaining from plunder and for controlling crime.

[2] Munro's Minute of 20 May 1828, in Arbuthnot, *Selections . . . from the Writings of Thomas Munro* (Madras, 1886), pp. 583–6, para. 6.

[3] Circular to Collector and Magistrate of Guntoor, 19 May 1835, *GDR* (977: 63–64).

[4] Circular to Collector-Magistrate of Guntur, 19 May 1835, *GDR* (3977: 63–64).

[5] ibid.

The fault, however, was not entirely the Collector's. Considering how often a new Collector came to Guntur and how little a newcomer could know about what was going on under the surface, there was little opportunity for determining the reliability of even Huzur officials, much less the efficiency of Amins. Considering how the amount of cultivation contracted or expanded each year, how rival claims to fields had to be resolved and each entry corrected annually, and how many minutes were available to the Amin for each field, the physical burden of supervision within a taluk demanded an exquisite degree of efficiency and gave a remarkable scope for chicanery.

Also, there was a grey area where direct supervision over the Amin was not altogether clearly defined. Magisterial power was subject to supervision through the judicial line. Departmental power in such matters as personnel selection, promotion, pensions, and discipline was exercised through the revenue line. Thus, while the Board of Revenue took no notice of day-to-day magisterial and police administration, an appeal by any district officer, whatever his department, had to be directed to the Board of Revenue. The practical results of this confused jurisdiction added greatly to the power of the Amin. Not until after the disclosures of the Madras Torture Commission in 1855 was a more refined system of police and magisterial supervision instituted.[1]

Between 1834 and 1837, no more than two Amins a year were dismissed from the Taluks in Guntur. Of five appeals made to the Board of Revenue by dismissed Amins, four were heard favourably and only one dismissal was sanctioned. This protection of Amins by the authorities in Madras seems to suggest that while European Collectors, flitting though the Huzur, could not always gain the support necessary to enforce their authority, Amins maintained a fairly permanent grip on the countryside.[2]

The Taluk was organized in much the same way as the district. In miniature it contained headquarters and field departments. The

[1] BOR *Proceedings*, 19 September 1836, para. 12, *MRP* (MRO: p. 12855). *Report of Commissioners for Investigation of Alleged Cases of Torture* (Madras, 1855).

[2] The five Amins were Mantri Venkatachallam, Bodi Krishniah, Tota Krishnammah, P. Canakiah, and D. Lakshminarsu Rao. BOR to Collector, 18, 25, 28 May 1835, *GDR* (3976–B: 229, 241, 245–53, 255–63, 349–56); 27 July 1835, *GDR* (3976–B: 467–76). BOR *Proceedings*, Nos. 29 and 30 of 21 July, 1836: *MRP* (MRO: pp. 9714–16); Nos. 28 and 29 of 28 July 1936, *MRP* (MRO: pp. 10005 f.) or *GDR* (3978: 527–8).

Thana Kasba was the capital of the Taluk. It was the town or village where the headquarters (cutcherry) of the division was located. This kasba was thought of as a field station and its cutcherry was rarely referred to as an institution.

Kasba establishments were much the same in their organization with only minor differences arising out of their peculiar circumstances. Guntur Thana had a *Kotwal* (Town Police Chief) with a Gumashta to assist him. Stations having only police duties would naturally have smaller establishments; however, a regular Thana Kasba without land revenue responsibility still kept a fairly sizeable establishment since the other revenue and general service duties still had to be performed. (See Appendix I for complete breakdown.)

Having already shown how the zamindaris fell under government (*amani*) control during the famine, we proceed to show how as a result of a novel Government policy, this *amani* management was entrusted to the Zamindars acting as Amildars or Revenue Collectors on behalf of the Government.

The idea was first put forward by Malcolm Lewin on 28 September 1834, when in discussing the affairs of Repalli and the soon coming of age of Jangana Rao, he suggested that it might be wiser for all the Zamindars to manage their own estates on behalf of the Government. Since all the zamindaris were faring even worse under *amani* than they had under their 'owners', a fact not surprising in view of the famine, epidemics and a headless administration, the Collector pointed out that it would be years before conditions came back to normal. It would take longer for the revenue arrears to be liquidated, and still longer for the estates to yield a profit. Surely the Zamindars, whose interests were closely linked with the welfare of their 'properties', would take greater pains to free themselves and their lands than would the district officers whose livelihood depended upon a continuance of government (*circari*) control.[1]

Although the suggestion was favourably received (Repalli had already been put into the hands of its proprietor), the first formal proposal for the adoption of this policy was made by the Board of Revenue on 14 March 1836. Since the Vasireddy Zamindari was considered to have fallen into its deplorable condition because

[1] Lewin to BOR, 28 September 1834, *GDR* (3990: 287–95).

of exceptional circumstances, it was decided that the person most interested in restoring these lands to normal should have control of the management.[1] The Governor, Lieutenant-General Frederick Adam, having recently toured these distressed areas, approved of this step shortly thereafter.[2] An order to this effect was sent to the Collector in June and on 12 August 1836, Ramanadha Babu was restored to his possessions.[3] The Manur Rao Zamindaris of Sattanapalli and Chilkalurpad were also restored to their owners as Amildars before the year was out.[4] Only the Malraju possessions remained under *amani* control.[5]

The Court of Directors, having already given tacit approval to this policy on 16 May 1837,[6] confirmed the decision a year later. Their opinion was recorded as follows: 'With regard to the question . . . as to the general expediency in cases of temporary attachment of permitting the Zamindar to manage the Estate as Ameen, we are disposed to think with advertence to the frequent instances of ill success of Circar management, that it would be advisable to adopt the course which you have suggested.'[7] Having a knowledge of his own villages which it might take a stranger some time to acquire and having an interest to relieve his estate of its embarassments 'with the least possible delay',[8] the Zamindar was bound to be able to exercise a more vigilant control than either a Collector or 'stranger'. Since each Zamindar would be 'accountable directly to the Collector and subject to his orders',[9] a minimal risk was foreseen. Regarding the general applicability of this policy, the Court concluded by suggesting: 'We think it would be wise to intimate to the Collectors generally that they are at liberty to suggest this course.'[10]

[1] BOR to Mathison, 14 March 1836, *GDR* (3978: 191–8).

[2] Extract of Minute of Consultation (5 April), BOR to Mathison, 7 April 1836, GDR (3978: 213–18).

[3] BOR to Bruce, 16 June 1836, *GDR* (3978: 433); 22 August 1836, *GDR* (3978: 591–7, 601). Goldingham to Cotton (Appendix C), 13 December 1839, *MRP* (280: 7: 2800), No. 30 of 16 April 1841. *Note:* Although Ramanadha Babu had been declared heir by the Sadr Adalat, the case was pending before the King-in-Council.

[4] *Goldingham's Report* (Appendix C), ibid.

[5] BOR to Mathison, 17 December 1836, *GDR* (3978: 847–59).

[6] Extract of Despatch (16 May 1837), BOR to Goldingham, 25 June 1838, *GDR* (5369: 100–8).

[7] Extract of COD *Despatch* (No. 5 of 9 May 1838), BOR to Goldingham, 20 May, *GDR* (5370: 135–7). The same may be found in *Madras Despatches* (IOL: 90: 848), para. 80. Also see paras. 71–73, 79.

[8] ibid. [9] ibid. [10] ibid. para. 80.

The implications of this policy on administrative organization and personnel and on the balance of power among various local factions cannot be ignored; for, while the organizational structure remained largely intact, the entry of the Zamindars and their diwans directly into the administration was bound to be disturbing. Some government positions were almost sure to become redundant while openings in the zamindari establishments were just as likely to occur.

District organization of judicial, magisterial, and police operations ended at the divisional or taluk level. Below the taluks but above the villages was an intermediate level which was strictly oriented for revenue operations. These subdivisions were of two varieties. The main line of territorial subdivision rested upon land revenue administration. The secondary line revolved around the levying of inland customs on commercial routes.

Circles of from one to twenty-four villages which constituted the territorial sub-divisions of a taluk were called *samutus* (or *mutthas*).[1] When these units were under *amani* control, each was under the executive charge of Samatdar (or a Samutudar) who was paid between Rs. 10 and 14 a month and given the help of a Gumashta, a Paigasti (overseer), usually a Munshi, and two or three peons. (These were paid Rs. 7, 5, 5, and 4 respectively.)[2]

With the exception of police authority, the duties of a Samatdar were almost the same as those of a Tahsildar though on a lower plain and within a smaller compass. He was furnished with circulars and forms to guide him in nearly every duty, whether land revenue, motarpha, maramat, intelligence, or general administration. His *chawadi* or small office was usually located in the largest village (*kasba*) of his division or at the place where he lived; but much of his time was divided among the villages under his charge.[2]

When the growing season began in April and May, the Samatdar visited each of his villages. In counsel with village officers and

[1] These *samutus* should not be confused with the ancient samutus which were much larger, being more equivalent to the taluk. The *mutthas* were the units which had been put together and sold to the Zamindars. These same units in the latter part of the nineteenth century came to be called *firkas*.

[2] Stokes to BOR, para. 3, 17 August 1847, *GDR* (124: 5405: 103–20). A complete description of the office as it functioned in Guntur is given.

leaders, he arranged terms for landholding and allotted land unoccupied due to deaths, departures, or relinquishment. Proposals (*darkhasts*) were received from Ryots based on agreements (*kaulnamas*) of previous years. Before acting on these proposals, the Samatdar looked at the fields to ascertain that boundaries had not been moved, that each field was big enough for one plough only, and that all of the fields were properly divided, numbered, and marked with reference to soil quality. All this was done in the presence of village leaders. A reduced proposal required the sanction of the Amin and a check to see there was no 'combination' to deceive the government. Outsiders (*payakaris*) could not be granted more favourable terms than village residents. Once a proposal was accepted, the Ryot signed a contract (*kararnama*), which was entered in a special book, and he received a copy of his agreement (*kaulnama*).[1]

The Samatdar sent fortnightly reports called *pandraradas* to the Thana Kasba. Based on returns from Karnams, these reports described agricultural progress in detail—i.e. ploughing, sowing, crops, water supply, blight, insects, or anything else which might bear on harvests and revenues. In the company of village leaders, the Samatdar regularly inspected fields and described each field in detail by consecutive number in another special book. He was 'strictly prohibited from making rough notes first and filling up the book afterwards'.[2] Filled up on the spot and sent directly to the Amin, this book was supposed to include estimates of produce, evidence of fraud and pilfering, and steps taken to counteract deception.[3]

During *Jamabandi*, the Samatdar was to spare no pains in coming to early agreements on pasturage fees (*pullari*) for each village. He was required to have the Ryots, Karnams, and other villagers on hand when the Huzur arrived. Then, as *kauls* or final agreements were handed out stipulating past and current obligations, he was to give a quick answer to any question and on any complaint or dispute. Karnams with their receipt books assisted him in answering the questions of the Amin and the Lord Huzur (Collector).[4]

When the collection season arrived, the Samatdar was required

[1] Translation of a Telugu *Huknama* giving Samatdars their duties, Stokes to BOR, paras. 1–8, 17 August 1847, *GDR* (124: 5405: 105–20).
[2] ibid. para. 10. [3] Stokes *Huknama* to Samatdars, op. cit. paras. 10–12.
[4] ibid. paras. 13–15.

to keep a sharp but aloof eye on the cutting, thrashing, and measuring of the *kails* (*kayalu*) or 'heaps'. With his tax-roll (*kistubandi*), which specified the dates and amounts of monthly instalments in each village, he was to see that village officers were not premature in their collections, that they made no extra collections, and so on. His *khalas* book (an abstract of demands, current and arrears, including motarpha) for each village was kept up to date. One page showed the amount for each date and the other, balances still remaining from earlier dates. If any discrepancies appeared from what were supposed to be frequent comparisons, the explanations of the Karnams on why the receipt books of Ryots did not tally with those of the village were to be forwarded to the Amin in another special book.[1]

The Samatdar was required to record daily where and how he used his time. He was to discover from local leaders all that was going on. He was to keep up with facts about deaths, departures, occupational changes (liable for motarpha), new arrivals, and so on. These facts were to be checked for accuracy. A regular account of sheep, goats, cattle, and other livestock was to be kept. An eye was to be kept on the weather, water supply, tanks and canals, bridges and roads, and the effects of gales and heavy rain. The number of tank diggers and maramat coolies, of carts (*bandis*), bullocks, palankin bearers, and portage coolies for each village was to be registered. Proclamations or notices 'by beat of tom-tom' were his responsibility. All state buildings, grounds, traveller's bungalows or village choultries (rest houses), and groves (*topus*) were under his care.[2]

If the responsibilities of a Samatdar were heavy, the circumstances under which he operated were more favourable. He was almost invariably a local Niyogi Brahman who was deeply involved and closely connected with the affairs of his subdivision, restrictions against landed or family interests notwithstanding. He was rarely promoted. In proportion to the number of his community at the Samutu level or below, few reached the Huzur. Also, supervision over him was very light. Hudleston Stokes wrote, 'It is feared that [the position] also affords great temptation to become versed in the intrigues and corruptions of the Karnams while there is neither the same opportunity for Collectors personally to observe the character and conduct of

[1] Stokes *Huknama* to Samatdars, op. cit. paras. 16–20. [2] ibid. paras. 20–29.

individuals nor to teach them sound principles of action as there is in the case of the Hoozoor servants.'[1] What was true in 1847 was undoubtedly much more true in 1837.

At least forty-six *chaukis* (inland customs stations) and two sea customs stations blocked the flow of traffic through Guntur District. For Rs. 10 to 12 a month, a Chaukidar at each station supervised a Gumashta, a Paigasti, and four or five peons in making sure that every cart (*bandi*) and every pole coolie (*kavadi*) caravan was stopped, searched, registered, and made to pay. A community around each station lived by trading in food, fodder, and travel accommodations. Each one of these stations was a barrier to commerce and each Chaukidar contributed to a slowing down and paralysis of the economy.

After a period of investigation, a preliminary step was taken in 1837 toward the breaking of these barriers. The number of dutiable commodities was cut down to thirty-six items and the number of *chaukis* within the district was reduced to twenty-six.[2] As might be expected, protests came from those communities which thrived from inland customs.[3] Nevertheless, gradual progress continued. The Government was faced with the dilemma of having to initiate reforms without tampering with or anatagonizing the society. It was not until 1844 that Chaukidars, with all that they represented, were completely eliminated within the Presidency.[4]

Little need be said about villages which has not already been dealt with in previous chapters. The really significant feature about this level was the durability of its institutions and the tenaciousness of its leading groups. Following ancient customs, elders and leaders of each village gathered under a wide-spreading tree where without any concern for time they talked, and deliberated for days before deciding what was necessary to strengthen or perpetuate their influence. It was only natural that they should be the rich

[1] Stokes to BOR, para. 4, ibid.

[2] BOR to Goldingham, 20 July 1837, *GDR* (5368: 191–204); 18 September 1837, *GDR* (5368: 240–4); and 13 August 1838, *GDR* (5369: 151–3).

[3] *Arzis* of Trader Karnams, Banians, &c., Collector to BOR, 15 July 1837, *GDR* (5393: 95–115, 159–61); 21 October 1837, *GDR* (79: 5393: 183–97).

[4] BOR Secretary to Stokes, 28 March 1844, *GDR* (5375: 91–93). *Act IV of 1844* effective from 1 April.

and the twice-born though, if they were discerning, they knew enough to realize that the poor and lowly could not supply goods and services without obtaining minimal satisfactions for their physical and emotional needs. These leaders were the strong few, the village elite, the fountainhead of local influence. In combination with the Samatdar, who was nothing more than a Pedda Ryot over Ryots, a Pedda Karnam over Karnams, and a Grand Headman over Headmen, these leaders were much more formidable than they appeared.

One must not be overly swayed by the polemics of this period which tried to show that one system or another had destroyed the whole fabric of village society overnight. There was a tendency for Munro supporters to attack the deadly evil of the 1802 regulations by arguing that the whole fabric of village society and organization, with its weight of centuries, was destroyed by appointing a single Headman and making him responsible to a police Daroga. Opponents of the Munro system, on the other hand, argued that in treating with each individual Ryot, a fatal blow was struck at the tradition of joint-responsibility which before had checked oppression of the weak.[1]

Government policies seem to have followed the single outstanding agreement which emerged from these opposing arguments . . . i.e. that village society and organization should not be disturbed. Two pronouncements which filtered down to the Collectorate in 1837 serve as examples of this attitude.

First, the Court of Directors went out of its way, digressing from comments on an extra-revenue report, to warmly approve a Madras Resolution (21 July 1835) on the 'impropriety of allowing men of no property to engage as Renters'.[2] Such a resolution was hardly a helping hand to a marginal cultivator aspiring to break the chains of poverty and serfdom and to enter the rarified atmosphere of financial independence.

Second, the Government circulated an order giving village

[1] J. W. B. Dykes, *Salem, an Indian Collectorate* (London, 1853), pp. 28–29. *Note:* Both chapter one and chapter four seek to show, in fact, how little the villages had been disturbed by what went on above them.

[2] Extract of COD *Despatch* No. 14 of 31 August 1836, para. 13, with Minutes of Consultation (25 April 1837) and Board Proceedings (10 May 1837) of the same, *GDR* (5368: 139–41). *Madras Despatches* (IOL: 87: 1282–4), Draft No. 403. This item in *Board's Collections* has been destroyed; but the whole problem was aired by Lord Elphinstone in his minute of 8 November 1838, *EC*, Governor's Minute Book, Vol. 4 (Box I–E).

panchayats power to adjudicate in cases between village ryots and *saukars* (moneylenders).[1] There was a constant tendency for poorer ryots to fall into the clutches of wealthier ryots and *saukars*. Village leaders tended to use district courts and court procedures (together with district officers) to weld chains of perpetual thraldom upon the poor or to fight each other whenever there was a falling out among themselves. District officers tended to meddle and to interfere in village troubles to their own advantage. The poor invariably needed money for seed or for some other stark necessity. The rich supplied these needs and then turned to the Government for *takavi* (advances), thus benefiting doubly.[2] The problem of what to do about village *saukars* and, indeed, about the whole problem of helping the poor was summarized by Goldingham when he wrote that 'a substitute [for saukars] embracing some accommodation to society without its evils is wanting'.[3] Nevertheless, a measure which increased the jurisdiction of a village panchayat also reinforced the position of the village leaders who invariably dominated its proceedings.

As far as the administration of land revenue was concerned, village leaders were equally strong. Karnams were aware that their accounts could not be thoroughly tested, that sufficient agency for such testing did not exist, and that apart from the ryots there was no way to prove or disprove the degree of latitude which they took: 'The real truth [was] that the annual settlement [was] the settlement of the Monegar and Curnum. The Ajmaish, or testing of the Curnam's work, [was] practically a farce.'[4] Neither the Collector, nor the Assistant Collector, nor the Tahsildar, nor the Samatdar could possibly attend to all or even a considerable portion of the cultivators who, according to the most extreme interpretation of ryotwari theory, were entitled to an annual adjustment and agreement for each plot of ground which they took up (even supposing that fixed field assessments existed). An occasional punishment of a Karnam or dismissal of a Samatdar was not enough to shake the slow moving and conservative village society from its traditional ways.

[1] BOR to Goldingham, 20 July 1837, *GDR* (5368: 7).

[2] Extract COD *General Despatch* No. 15 of 19 September 1838, para. 42, *GDR* (5370: 35–39), Consultations (18 December 1838) and *Proceedings* (11 February 1839).

[3] *Goldingham's Report* to Cotton, para. 121, 13 December 1839, *MRP* (280: 7: 2572), No. 30 of 16 April 1841.

[4] Ricketts, op. cit. pp. 322, 348.

Reference has already been made in chapter I to the natural calamities, economic distress, and social changes which were disrupting the Guntur District during this period. Underlying the immediate problems of recovery from these disruptions lay the deeper problems of economic paralysis which was slowing the wheels of enterprise and the still deeper transition which was bringing Guntur into the modern world. In view of the prevailing philosophies of that day, the dilemma of the British Government lay in trying to break this paralysis and to smooth this transition without tampering with institutions and traditions of local society. Goldingham, in feeling that 'Government should interfere as little as possible in the internal transactions of society' and in wishing that he could break the fetters which bound the economy of that society, seems to have reflected this dilemma in his own personal perplexity.[1]

[1] *Goldingham Report*, para. 108, loc. cit.

VIII

DISPUTES OVER THE SUCCESSION OF A SHERISTADAR, 1837–1839

ONCE before, when the continuity of British rule in Guntur had been broken by a rapid succession of Collectors, an indigenous system of power had grown up and in turn given rise to internecine factionalism within the Brahman elite of Guntur. Now again, there had been no steady hand on the administration since 1831. Many who had been involved in the earlier conflict were still able to carry on the struggle.[1] Old animosities smouldered waiting only for fresh breeze—the coming of yet another new Collector or the demise of the old Sheristadar—to stir them up once more.

John Goldingham took charge of Guntur on 29 July 1837. The son of the Presidency Astronomer, he had been born at Fort Saint George (1801), brought up in South India, and recommended to the Civil Service from Madras (1818).[2] Most of his early service had been in Madras; but since his return from furlough in 1835, he had moved in and out of four districts before being assigned to Guntur.[3] He was an energetic and practical person, interested in agriculture, engineering and economics and zealous for reform and evangelical missions.[4]

Following in the train of the new Acting Collector was Sabnavis Venkata Krishna Rao. He was a Desastha from a leading family. His father, Ananta Rao, had been Diwan to the Great

[1] *Elliot Report*, para. 60, 17 April 1846, loc. cit. Gordon Mackenzie, *A Manual of the Kistna District* (Madras, 1883), p. 358.

[2] *Writer's Petitions* (IOL: vol. 31: no. 4).

[3] C. C. Princep, *Record of Services of Madras Civilians* (London, 1885), p. 61.

[4] John Noble, *Robert Noble, Missionary to the Telugu People* (London, 1867), p. 125. Drach and Kuder, *The Telugu Mission* (Philadelphia, 1914), pp. 40–50 F. Gledstone, *The C.M.S. Telugu Mission* (Mysore, 1941), p. 1 states: 'More than any other man, the founder of our missions in that area was Mr. John Goldingham, of an old established family in Madras.'

Vasireddy, Vankatadri Naidu. One uncle, Narsinga Rao, had been Diwan to the Nawab of Masulipatam. Another uncle, Venkata Rao, had been Huzur Sheristadar both in Guntur and Masulipatam. And a third uncle, Kasava Rao, had been involved in the earlier factional strife. Krishna Rao had been Vakil (Attorney) to the Nawab of Masulipatam since 1828 and had won the favour of George Norton, the Advocate-General. An attempt to enter district service in 1831 had been stopped by a severe and prolonged fever. After recovering, he had hesitated. To 'a man of independent fortune', the lower grades held 'no inducement' and exposed him 'to the intrigues and corruption which enter so largely into the management of a district'.[1] Goldingham had told him in Masulipatam that one had to start at a lower position and then trust to seniority and merit for promotion. Krishna Rao followed Goldingham to Guntur and accepted an appointment as Amin of Vunglapuram Thana.

The stage was thus set for a renewal of conflict. Sita Ram was dying. Shashagiri Rao was already in the Huzur Cutcherry. Krishna Rao was nearby, waiting for any opportunity. Soon after Goldingham's arrival, factional controversy flared up and fanned out on to a broad front. First one side and then the other gained ground during the following years.

The new Collector faced circumstances which were anything but heartening. Edward Glass, the Acting Assistant Judge and Joint Criminal Judge, was the senior officer in Guntur. Two younger officers, a Joint Criminal Judge (A. S. Mathison) and an Acting Head Assistant Collector and Magistrate (G. A. Harris), were left in sole charge of the district after 2 July 1837. But these officers also were new to the district, Harris having come only a few months before. The last Acting Collector had left the district the previous November.[2]

As a result of this vacancy of authority early in 1837, the *Jamabandi* (Work of Settlement) for 1836–7, which should have been finished by the end of May, had not yet even begun. Goldingham's first task, therefore, was to settle the revenue for the past year and to begin the settlement work for the coming year. In the villages, he

[1] Goldingham to BOR, para. 2, 24 November 1837, *GDR* (5393: 221–7). An extract from a letter of G. Norton is enclosed.

[2] Mackenzie, op. cit. p. 358. Princip, op. cit. p. 60, 71, 97.

found that drought, grubs, and locusts had already destroyed the early crop.[1]

'It was apparent to me on taking charge of the district', wrote Goldingham, 'that the district had suffered greatly because of irregularities which had been going forward for some time past. I found the district depressed and the ryots dispirited. It became my duty to restore efficient management.'[2] The remedy for this situation could lie only in 'removing those who had brought about this state of things, who by their commanding influence in the Hoozoor were organizing instead of checking corruption'.[3]

As more and more maladministration came to light, Goldingham became convinced that 'there [was] a mutual understanding between Huzoor and Gibut [*Ghaibatu:* field] to the injury of the District'.[4] Ryots in several large Malraju villages refused to cultivate complaining that district officers had not fulfilled terms of an agreement by which outstanding revenue balances (which had not been paid by the villages) were to be cancelled. False estimates for bridges and for salt platforms had been made. Merchants had been required to pay Rs. 1 and 2 respectively for each hundred white and coloured cloths which they exported, in addition to the regular 5 per cent transit duty. Receivers of stolen property had been operating under the protection, if not with the co-operation, of the police. Haddanuri Bhavanarsu Rao, the Amin whom Krishna Rao replaced at Vunglapuram, had been dismissed for this reason.[5] The Manager of the Magistrate Department (Akkaraju Nityanandam), the Guntur *Kotwal* (Police Chief), and a Dafadar had to be removed because they maltreated Tadiconda Nagiah and caused his death.[6]

Although the new Collector received little support from members of the entrenched bureaucracy, he could not have learned so

[1] Goldingham (*Jamabandi Report*, Fasli 1247) to BOR, 6 September 1838, *GDR* (5394: p. 183).

[2] Goldingham to BOR, para. 2, 5 January 1839, *GDR* (5397: 1–24).

[3] ibid. para. 14.

[4] Goldingham to BOR, para. 4, 24 November 1837, *GDR* (5393: 222–7).

[5] BOR to Goldingham, para. 2, 3 August 1837, *GDR* (5368: 213–15); and BOR to Goldingham, para. 2, 14 June 1838, *GDR* (5369: 112–15).

[6] Goldingham to BOR, paras. 2–4, 11 October 1837, *GDR* (5393: 117–83). Goldingham to Chief Secretary, paras. 1–4, 19 July 1838: *GDR* (5394: 11–16). *Note:* These incidents may well have been connected with organized gangs of thugs which were found operating between Guntur and Bezwada during the same year.

much in such a short time if he had not had the help of at least one energetic and enthusiastic subordinate. Sita Ram, the Huzur Sheristadar who was nearing death, was preoccupied with private matters. The Naib Sheristadar, who was in charge of the Salt, Sayar, and Maramat Departments, could hardly have been enthusiastic about these recent disclosures. The Head Assistant Sheristadar, whose main experience was magisterial and whose present work was in land revenue, had even less reason to be happy over the implications of these disclosures. Only Krishna Rao and his friends stood to gain; and therefore, he probably did his best to keep the Collector informed.

In October, as soon as Sita Ram's death was reported, Goldingham nominated Krishna Rao to fill the vacancy.[1] A fortnight later, the Board of Revenue asked for information about his experience and qualifications and requested the service records of alternative candidates.[2] The desired information was sent to the Board on 24 November. The Collector's defence of Krishna Rao's nomination was based on: (1) the unfitness of the other candidates; (2) the deplorable condition of the district; and (3) the qualifications of Krishna Rao.[3]

Not one of six alternative candidates was acceptable to Goldingham. Nakkalapalli Subha Rao, the Naib Sheristadar, was involved in corruption. Nyapati Shashagiri Rao, the Head Assistant Sheristadar who had spent most of his service in magisterial work, was not qualified; nor was his integrity unimpeachable. Tyar Khan, the Amin of Vinukonda, was a man of high character; but since he was a very wealthy saukar with extensive dealings throughout this district, his private interests clashed with the governmental duties of a Sheristadar. For this reason, Tyar Khan's eligibility to become Huzur Shroff had been questioned on an earlier occasion. The impartiality of the present Huzur Shroff, Kanchanapalli Krishna Rao, was prejudiced on the same grounds. Neither of the Palnad Amins were desirable. Mandapanti Subha Rao had been a Maddatgar only five years before and Veladandi Dasapah had been tried by the Board under Regulation IX of 1822 for malversation.[4]

Central to Goldingham's thinking were his convictions: first,

[1] Goldingham to BOR, paras. 2–3, 27 October 1837, *GDR* (88: 5393: 219–21).
[2] BOR to Goldingham, 9 November 1837, *GDR* (5368: 281).
[3] Goldingham to BOR, paras. 1–6, 24 November 1837, *GDR* (5393: 222–7).
[4] Goldingham to BOR, para. 4, 24 November 1837, *GDR* (5393: 222–7).

'that both mismanagement and corruption entered largely into the causes which [had] brought the District into its present state';[1] and second, that administrative efficiency and reform could only be achieved by selecting a person whose 'independent fortune, character, and respectability appeared to be a guarantee that he would be above all intrigue and corruption'.[2] Since the ruling elite in the local bureaucracy dominated the administration and were responsible for the condition of the district, it was necessary to look elsewhere for reliable officers. After 'a most painful effort to procure a fit person whose ability and integrity would give full confidence for the welfare of the district', a choice had been made.[3] Krishna Rao had already done much in restoring the confidence and efficiency of the administration, Goldingham reported.

In their proceedings of 16 December, the Board of Revenue disapproved of the selection of Krishna Rao. Neither a few months as Amin in a Vasireddy taluk nor close ties with the families of the Vasireddy Zamindar and the Masulipatam Nawab were reassuring qualifications for a Sheristadar of Guntur. The selection of a Tahsildar (Amin) would have been preferable; but among the various alternatives, Nyapati Shashagiri Rao was considered the best choice. The Collector was urged to nominate this individual.[4]

Meanwhile, the Malraju villages had been settled and the overdue settlement (*jamabandi*) was progressing slowly into the Mangalagiri, Guntur, and Tenali divisions (taluks). Neither the Zamindars, their Diwans, nor the Amins[5] were disposed to produce accounts, particularly those pertaining to the details of each village. Instead of giving information on the true resources of each village and the real results of their management, these field officers did their best to make all accounts agree with what meagre abstracts they were willing to submit.[6] No doubt Krishna Rao worked hard to produce a creditable report; however, he worked even harder, in co-operating with Goldingham, to

[1] Goldingham to BOR, para. 4, 24 November 1837, *GDR* (5393: 222–7).
[2] ibid. para. 5.
[3] Goldingham to BOR, para. 17, 5 January 1839, *GDR* (1: 5397: 1–24).
[4] BOR to Goldingham, paras. 2–3, 16 December 1837, *GDR* (5368: 296–8).
[5] Out of thirteen regular Amins, nine were supported by the Zamindars. See Bruce to BOR, para. 2, 13 June 1836, *GDR* (5392: 214–21).
[6] Goldingham (*Jamabandi Report*, Fasli 1246) to BOR, paras. 60, 9, 21, 36–38, 3 February, 1838, *GDR* (1: 5394: 32–63). Goldingham gave Krishna Kao most of the credit for this report.

substitute key members of the opposing faction with his own supporters.

Both Tenali Thana and Baptala Thana were within the Vasireddy Zamindari. When the Zamindari had fallen under *amani* control in 1822, the district officers entering these taluks had thoroughly aroused the enmity of the many zamindari servants who had been removed from their positions and had become unemployed. Apparently their grievances had been nursed for a long time; for when Goldingham entered these divisions during the settlement (*jamabandi*), a flood of accusations rose up against the district officers who until the year before had been in authority. Komartis (Telugu Vaishyas) told of how they had been forced to pay extortionate sums of money in order to carry on their business. Village Karnams, Ryots, and others told of how they had been forced to pay in order to escape extortionate revenue demands. One Head Ryot, Petrigunta Subbiah, produced letters from the Naib Shersitadar, Nakkalapalli Subha Rao, and from Nyapati Shashagiri Rao demanding Rs. 310. The former Amin, Muhamad Khan, had sent M. K. Veerapah to deliver the letters and to collect the money.[1]

Confronted with so much evidence, the Collector reasoned along two alternative lines. If the charges against Nakkalapalli Subha Rao were false, then most of the Karnams and Ryots presenting the accusations were acting in concert with zamindari servants to bring ruin upon the Naib Sheristadar and his subordinates. If the charges were true, then the whole hierarchy of district officers in the taluk had been acting under special instructions from officers in the Huzur Cutcherry. Either Tota Krishnamah,[2] Ramanadha Babu's Diwan or Nakkalapalli Subha Rao—possibly even both—were guilty of 'defrauding the public'.[3] Both sides had martialled their evidence with skill so that, on the face of it, there was little to choose between one side or the other.

In his decision, Goldingham was consistent. After hearing the

[1] BOR to Goldingham, paras. 1–14, 10 December 1838, *GDR* (5369: 213–21). *Note:* The line between extortion and bribery was so thin that each case might have originated as a bribe which was not honoured.

[2] Tota Krishnamah was an old and notorious officer who had held the trust of Thomas Oakes twenty years earlier and whom Ramanadha Babu had specially requested to carry on his administration.

[3] Goldingham to BOR, para. 2, 5 January 1839, *GDR* (1: 5397: 1–24).

witnesses and examining the evidence, he was convinced that scarcely a village in these taluks was free from systematic exactions at the expense of both the Government and the people.[1] He determined to break the power of the ruling group in the Huzur. In accomplishing this purpose, he followed two practical policies. First, he proceeded 'against as few as is consistent with efficient administration'; and second, he avoided the hazards and delays of judicial proceedings, preferring to neutralize rather than to eradicate dangerous influences.[2]

Nakkalapalli Subha Rao, a tried member of the old elite, was obviously an obstacle in the path of Krishna Rao and his party and a barrier to the administrative reforms which Goldingham had in mind. The Collector wrote: 'I had no desire to act against him under Regulation IX of 1822. My punishment was confined to the minor act of dismissal.'[3] Subha Rao was fined and removed from his position into the outer darkness of the *ghaibatu* where he was put in charge of a thana. Thus, without the risk of slow proceedings which would have accompanied a more serious action, Goldingham hoped to take a shortcut toward gaining control of the administration. Krishna Rao also gained at the expense of the entrenched leaders of the Cutcherry.[4]

During the months which followed there was no official Huzur Sheristadar. The Board of Revenue persistently turned down the Acting Collector's request that Krishna Rao might be his Sheristadar. In February, the Jamabandi Report for 1836–7 was finally sent to Madras; and still, the merits of Krishna Rao were not recognized. Finally, on 2 April 1838, Krishna Rao was appointed as Naib Sheristadar, stepping into the position which had been vacated by Nakkalapalli Subha Rao the previous November; moreover, in the absence of a Huzur Sheristadar, Krishna Rao was directed to carry on the duties of that office until final arrangements could be made. Meanwhile, Nyapati Shashagiri Rao, the Head Assistant, was ordered to serve as Acting Naib.[5]

The old leaders now began to meet this threat to their power. Nakkapalli Subha Rao had wasted no time in sending a petition

[1] Goldingham to BOR, paras. 2–4.
[2] ibid. para. 13.
[3] ibid. para. 14.
[4] BOR to Goldingham, paras. 1–13, 10 December 1838, *GDR* (5369: 213–21).
[5] Goldingham to BOR, para. 2, 22 May 1838, *GDR* (26: 5394: 138–41).

to the Board appealing against his dismisal from the Huzur. The Board sent for the proceedings on the case. These were dispatched from Guntur on 19 May 1838. On 5 July, strong objections were returned from Madras, condemning the arrangements which had been made in the Huzur Cutcherry and refusing to sanction the appointment of Krishna Rao.

Objections and protests continued to fly between Guntur and Madras until matters came to a head. On 6 September, in concluding his Jamabandi Report for 1837–8, Goldingham spoke 'in the highest terms of approbation' of Sabnavis Venkata Krishna Rao who had served as Head Sheristadar since the previous October. Giving his protegé full credit for much of the work in the last two settlement reports, the Collector explained that he had been unable to give immediate effect to the Board's order of 5 July because he and Krishna Rao had been in the final stages of the settlement. He added:

> It is but fair to him as well as myself to bring his merits before the Board in this place as I would indulge the hope that the result of the year will place him in a favourable position before the Board and tend to show that I selected him after full consideration. I would add after much anxiety of mind . . . that I have no expectation of meeting with an individual who will take the same interest in promoting the real welfare of the District in its present condition, and forward my management.[1]

Goldingham asked that the present arrangement, with Krishna Rao officiating as Head Sheristadar, might be allowed to continue. Finally, referring to the desperate needs of the district, he requested 'the indulgence of the Board for a discretionary power in the selection of public servants'.[2] The Collector was sure that if the Board would but send for Krishna Rao they would become convinced. Nevertheless, he promised that the Board's final orders would be 'promptly obeyed'.[3]

While it was not until the following March (14 March 1838) that the Board of Revenue acted on this Jamabandi Report, they wasted little time in replying to this concluding paragraph. On 27 September the Board became adamant. Krishna Rao was to be removed from the Huzur Sheristadarship forthwith. A month later (25 October), on learning that Krishna Rao's being on circuit had

[1] Goldingham to BOR, para. 52 in the *Jamabandi Report*, Fasli 1327, 6 September 1838, *GDR* (5394: 182–206).
[2] ibid.
[3] Goldingham to BOR, para. 52, 6 September 1838, *GDR* (5394: 182–206).

caused further delay, the exasperated Board sent off still another letter. In this they gave 'their express desire for the nomination of a fit person to that office' and suggested that 'Nyapaty Shashagherry Row should be appointed' if the Collector could not find such a person.[1] If there were any more delay, the Board itself would nominate Nyapati Shashagiri Rao. Goldingham dared not to delay longer. On 15 November, the nomination of the 'former Head Sheristadar in Rajahmundry to the situation of Head Sheristadar in Guntoor' was sanctioned 'upon the removal of Kristna Row from that post'.[2]

As if the utter overruling of their Collector in Guntur on such an important selection were not enough, the Board of Revenue now added insult to injury by completely vindicating Nakkalapalli Subha Rao and ordering him to resume his position in the Cutcherry as Naib Sheristadar. How strongly they heeded the old elite of Guntur against the opinions of their own Collector was now apparent. Pronouncing the case against Nakkalapalli Subha Rao to be 'unfounded and apparently connected with a conflict between Public Servants',[3] they blamed Goldingham for inconsistency in failing to move against the others who were equally implicated. After months pressing for the nomination of Shashagiri Rao, now, when at last their Collector had unwillingly bent before their will, they blamed him for nominating a person implicated in the accusations against Nakkalapalli Subha Rao. But in the very next phrase of the same sentence, the Board wrote: '. . . and the Board have reason to know that [Shashagiri Rao] has been highly esteemed for his conduct by various gentlemen under whom he has served in Guntoor and other Districts. Having a long service of years, these facts are irreconcilable with the findings of the Acting Collector and his conclusion that the truth of the charges was unquestionably established.'[4] Thus that instinctive grasp of a local situation which a good Collector could have was ignored; and what personal judgement and discretion Goldingham possessed, together with the mass of evidence which he had gathered on the spot, was brushed aside.

[1] Goldingham to BOR, paras. 16, 17, 5 January 1839, *GDR* (1: 5397: 1–24).
[2] BOR to Goldingham, para. 2, 15 November 1838, *GDR* (5369: 200–1).
[3] BOR to Goldingham, para. 12, 10 December 1838, *GDR* (5369: 213–21).
[4] ibid. para. 13.

Goldingham reacted predictably. On 5 January 1839 he pointed out the 'position of great difficulty' in which he was placed by the Board's letter. Its style '[was] deeply wounding to the feelings of a Public Officer holding a highly responsible situation' and '[cast] a reflexion which [operated] greatly to the disparaging of [his] character as a Public Officer of the Government and with the Home Authorities, if left unanswered'.[1] He hoped that the Board would reconsider and admit that they had acted unjustly. He had not moved against others, equally implicated, out of caution. He had wished to establish one solid case as an example and, thereby, to restore discipline, authority, and efficiency to the administration. He had recommended Shashagiri Rao as Huzur Sheristadar only because he was 'pressed by the Board to do so'.[2] Surely, when, after pressing him for so long to nominate Shashagiri Rao, no good word had been given in favour of this Desastha, it should have been clear to the Board that the Collector was apprehensive of this person's influence upon the administration.

Cut off from the support of his superiors and the co-operation of his subordinates alike, the Collector was indeed in a difficult position. Despite all his efforts to uproot the old guard, whom we may now call the Nyapati party or faction, they remained in control of the administration; moreover, the insurgent group, or Sabnavis party, was itself in danger of being isolated and uprooted. Thus, the interests of the Sabnavis party were linked with the purposes of the Collector while the interests of the Nyapati party were linked with the Board of Revenue.

Feeling it his duty to protest, both on behalf of himself and on behalf of the district, Goldingham directed a special appeal to the Governor-in-Council against the acquittal of Nakkalapalli Subha Rao, against excessive interference by the Board, and in favour of his nomination of Krishna Rao. He tried to vindicate his actions by showing how much wastage had been cut down and how much extortion and oppression eliminated. He sought to defend a wider use of discretion and initiative in the hands of a Collector.

By 'strange' coincidence, Lord Elphinstone received a petition from Nakkalapalli Subha Rao, complaining of his removal to make room for Krishna Rao, at the same time that he received Goldingham's appeal. After examining the papers connected with

[1] Goldingham to BOR, paras. 13, 16, 5 January 1839, *GDR* (1: 5397: 1–24).
[2] ibid. para. 17.

the case, His Lordship in Council merely noted that the Board's orders should have been carried out, entirely approved of those orders, and told Goldingham to submit them.[1]

There is no evidence that Goldingham tried to press the Government further. While some officers were forever harassing the Governor for favours and for every imagined slight, Goldingham only wrote privately to Elphinstone twice and then only because his family's health prompted him to ask for a transfer from Guntur to Chittoor.[2] As a matter of course, his official appeal was reported in a General Letter to the Home authorities. Three years later—after he had left Guntur—he learned that his conduct in delaying to carry out pre-emptory orders, which were strictly within the judicial capacity of the Board of Revenue, was noticed 'with much dissatisfaction' by the Court of Directors.[3] This censure, however, was tucked into the middle of a General Despatch to Madras. The fact that it brought no comment from the Board of Control strengthens the presumption that the matter was routine and without special significance to the Home authorities. The paragraph from the Home Despatch was simply passed down to Guntur by the Government for the information of the Collector; and it disappeared into the district records.[4]

[1] Chief Secretary (H. Chamier) to BOR Secretary, transmitting an extract of a Minute of Consultation, dated 18 June 1839, on BOR *Proceedings* of 24 January 1839. BOR to Goldingham, 27 June 1839, *GDR* (5370: 154).

[2] Goldingham to Elphinstone, 2 December 1841 and 23 June 1842, *Elphinstone Collection* (IOL: Eur. MSS. F. 87), Governor's Letters Received. Vol. 8, Box 2–D. *Note:* Two Goldingham infants died and were buried in Guntur by this date.

[3] COD *Despatch* to GOM, para. 8, 27 April No. 6 of 1842: *MRD* (97: 441–59).

[4] Minute of Consultation, para. 5, No. 9 of 9 August 1842, *MRP* (280: 24: 4108). BOR *Proceedings* to Collector of Guntur Zillah, 5 September 1842: *GDR* (5373: 360–1).

IX

STRUGGLES OVER THE REMOVAL OF DISTRICT OFFICERS, 1837–1839

INTENSE as were the disputes in district headquarters, Goldingham found that factional struggles were equally severe in the field, especially when he became involved in the removal or restoration of district officers. He found himself engulfed in the sound and fury and bitterness of each local contest. He was perplexed by the stubborn resistance of the Vetsha family and amazed by the persistence of Vungamulu Subha Rao. The complexities of each struggle vividly reflected the nature of local society.

Vetsha Dharmapuri was appointed Amin of Rachur Thana. He came to Mangalagiri, the taluk headquarters town (*kasba*), at a very opportune time. Years before, after the death of Vasreddy Jaganadha Babu (in 1827), Ramanadha Babu had borrowed money from Sabnavis Ananta Rao, the old Vasireddy Diwan, and had given valuable cloth goods as collateral. The loan had not been repaid and, in consequence, the cloth had remained in a sealed warehouse (*godown*) at Amaravati. But when Ananta Rao had died in 1837, the Zamindar had demanded his cloth and upon being refused had forcibly broken into the warehouse at night. He and his servants had then been arrested for stealing the cloth, which Krishna Rao claimed to be Sabnavis property.

The charges against the Zamindar rested upon evidence contained in a report by the Village Munsif of Amaravati. This report disappeared from the files (*daftaramus*) of the Thana Cutcherry on the eve of the Zamindar's appearance before the Criminal Court. Further investigation revealed that the Amaravati Munsif 'had been done away with' (presumably murdered).[1] The case fell for lack of evidence.

[1] Goldingham to BOR, para. 4, 7 November 1838, *GDR* (76: 5394: 298–311).

Word soon reached Goldingham that Dharmapuri had secretly turned the crucial report over to the Vakil of the Zamindar because it 'stated facts fatal to the claim of the Zamindar'.[1] Other accusations against the Amin also came to Guntur. What the Collector uncovered when he came to Mangalagiri prompted him to dismiss Dharmapuri.

Vetsha Dharmapuri was arraigned before the Criminal Court for taking an official report fom a Government record office and disposing of it. In his own defence, he argued that the report had never existed and that, if it had existed, it must have been stolen by the young Police Maddatgar, Gulpati Suriah. Suriah produced a letter to his family in Amaravati mentioning the report. The profusion of testimony which flowed from both sides was so heavy that the Court really could not discover where the truth lay. But an opinion was finally handed down discounting the material importance of the report and refusing to consider reasons for its disappearance. Dharmapuri was acquitted.[2]

On 19 December 1837, the former Amin laid an appeal petition before the Board of Revenue. Eleven months later, the Board asked the Collector to forward his original proceedings on the case.

Goldingham sent his papers early in November, 1838. He accused Dharmapuri of accepting money from the staff of the Mangalagiri temple so that police would look the other way 'on the death of the persons . . . crushed under the Cart at the Festival'.[3] Chandu Lal, the temple manager, had used a Komarti *gumashta* as go-between for the bribe. This Komarti had been caught trying to escape with the damning records while his brother had been sent to Hyderabad 'to prevent his giving evidence'.[4] Goldingham also accused the ex-Amin of playing with bazaar prices for private gain. Just when Company troops were scheduled to pass through the town and when local merchants stood to realize lucrative profits, he had threatened to order rice sold at two copper *dubs* (16 *dubus* = 1 anna) below the going price (*nirakh*). As a result, Gulapati Suriah, the Police Maddatgar, had been approached by a delegation of Komarti leaders. He had taken them to where the Amin was taking his noon rest under a *pandal* (awning/porch)

[1] Goldingham to BOR, para. 5.

[2] ibid. paras. 1–7 with enclosures, 7 November 1838, *GDR* (78: 5394).

[3] ibid. para. 8. *Note:* Concern over Car Festivals often recurred. Goldingham discussed it at some length, but saw no way to legislate people into safety, on 11 June 1840, *GDR* (5397: 217–20).

[4] ibid.

before his house; and he had watched them count out Rs. 29, of which two had not rung true and had been replaced.[1] Next, the ex-Amin had made exorbitant profits by secretly doubling all customs and excise (*sayr*) taxes and surcharges on all licences (*rawanas*), passes (*dastaks*), stamp paper rates, cloth, tobacco, and innumerable other articles of trade. It was clear 'that the practice which very likely was checked at one time [had] again taken root and been in force for some years'.[2] Finally, Dharmapuri had extorted bribes from the weaving community in return for lowering the loom tax (*motarpha*).

Goldingham felt sure that he had discovered what was really going on. But judicial procedures had tied his hands. In his opinion, the Appeal Petition had been written with 'the express purpose of prejudicing the Board—which it might do—against the selection of Subneviss Vencata Kristnarow' as Huzur Sheristadar.[3] While it was true that Konukala Jagiah, the Amin who had succeeded Dharmapuri in Mangalagiri, had been closely connected with the interests of the Nuzvid Zamindar and with Krishna Rao, Goldingham had intended no favouritism. Common kindness had prompted him to transfer Jagiah from one town to another when his health failed. Indeed Jagiah had only recently died. The Collector was convinced that many anonymous petitions were being sent to Madras so that every mishap or incident could be blamed upon the machinations of Krishna Rao or his followers.

The Board of Revenue, acting in its judicial capacity, adhered strictly to procedural technicalities. It ignored substantive aspects, minimized the importance of each charge, questioned the veracity of the evidence, and upheld the petition of Dharmapuri. 'Having attentively considered the circumstances which led to the Petitioner's removal from Office', the Board concluded that 'nothing [had] been established to his prejudice which should prevent his re-employment.'[4]

Chinna Ganjam was the chief centre in Guntur District for the turning of sea water into salt for domestic and inland markets. The importance of this local industry, in which the manufacture and

[1] Goldingham to BOR, paras. 9–10. *Note:* It is possible that the money was given so as to drive the price above normal and hence, enable an extra profit.
[2] ibid. para. 11.
[3] Goldingham to BOR, para. 18, 7 November 1838, *GDR* (5397: 298–311).
[4] BOR to Goldingham, paras. 1–7, 21 March 1839, *GDR* (5370: 70–74).

sale of salt was a Government monopoly,[1] may be seen in the fact that it yielded a revenue of almost 3 lakhs of rupees in 1837.[2] The Government's share was 7 annas out of each rupee of gross receipts from sales in its depots (*cotaurs*). Both the price of salt and the amount of salt produced were carefully regulated.[3]

There were approximately 400 manufacturers of salt at Chinna Ganjam. Their salt pans, which were merely long strips of land hollowed out to hold sea water, were held in much the same manner as the fields in an ordinary agricultural village. The same social hierarchy—from Brahman to Outcaste—also existed, but with one peculiarity. The salt ryots (salt manufacturers) were divided by that ancient and bitter communalism which has separated left- from right-hand castes. Differences over precedence and privilege in such matters as riding a horse, going in a palankin, carrying an umbrella, building a pandal, beating a drum, or having a procession could easily erupt into rioting.[4] The wealthier quarter of manufacturers were of the right-hand caste while the larger and poorer group were of the left-hand caste. The poor majority depended on moneylenders for their working capital.[5]

Trouble between left- and right-hand castes had been mounting before Vetsha Lakshmiah took charge on 22 June 1837. Ganagam Reddi Rao, his predecessor, had favoured the right-hand caste and had not permitted salt from the pans of the left-hand caste to be conveyed to the storage and sales platforms until much larger inducements were offered. One group had been required to pay dearly before its produce could be sold while the other group had been required to pay little or nothing. Reddi Rao, however, had been transferred from Chinna Ganjam before he could collect his money.[6]

Vetsha Lakshmiah did not wish to miss any possible benefits which might accrue to his office. He accepted Rs. 100; his Peshkar (Tota Lakshminarsu) accepted Rs. 50; his two Dafadars, Rs. 25 each; and Rs. 58 more were distributed among the *thana* staff by

[1] Regulation I of 1805 in A. D. Campbell, *Madras Code of Regulations* (Madras, 1840). The monopoly was introduced on orders from Bengal, 4 July 1805.

[2] Goldingham to BOR, para. 27 (*Jamabandi Report*, Fasli 1247), 6 September 1838, *GDR* (5394: 182–206).

[3] J. Boswell, *Nellore District Manual* (Madras, 1873), pp. 595–625.

[4] For details see *Elliot MSS.* (EOL: Eur. MSS. D. 321), pp. 168, 326–66.

[5] Goldingham to BOR, para. 4, ibid.

[6] Goldingham to BOR, para. 4, 27 October 1838, *GDR* (70: 5394: 281–9).

people of the left-hand caste. Shortly afterward, however, he incurred the bitter enmity of these people. He did not allow them to celebrate the ceremony of their Village Goddess; and he held up their application for the appointment of a special Munsif.[1]

Whether or not Sabnavis Venkata Krishna Rao got wind of this resentment or not is difficult to determine. But on 30 November 1837, five members of the left-hand caste community came before Goldingham at Vellatur, in Rachur Thana. Their leader, Guduboyana Sangareddy, complained against the Salt Amin of Ghinna Ganjam, charging him with extortion. Goldingham took testimony and, because he was too busy to go immediately, sent a newly appointed Sherista Peshkar, Edupudi Ramiah, down to Ghinna Ganjam to investigate. Twenty-six persons, salt ryots or Komartis, gave evidence before the Peshkar. Goldingham arrived and heard further evidence from the moneylenders who had advanced the bribe-money. Account books of the moneylenders, full of erasures, were taken as evidence. Tota Lakshminarsu, the Salt Peshkar, was dismissed and the *daffadars*, *paigastis*, *navisinda* and *dhalait* were demoted. Vetsha Lakshmiah was suspended, charged, and ordered to appear before the Collector in Bapatla as soon as his defence was prepared.[2]

At Vetsha Lakshmiah's request, the defence was written up by a gumashta of the Huzur Cutcherry. The suspended Amin came before the Collector and took an oath before the official Oath Administrator (*Shastri*). After the evidence of the witnesses was heard, he was allowed to examine the record and was permitted to cross-examine. 'Nothing essential to the defence was omitted.'[3] Finally, acting in his judicial capacity under Regulation IX of 1822, the Collector dismissed Vetsha Laksmiah from the service.

The ex-Amin soon sent an appeal to the Board of Revenue. He charged the Collector with favouritism and blamed Venkata Krishna Rao, Officiating Head Sheristadar, for bringing about his dismissal. He protested that the Sherista Peshkar was against him; that evidence had been deliberately chosen which was prejudicial to his cause; that some of the witnesses against him had been involved in gang robbery, sheep stealing, and burglary; that his defence had been improperly prepared by a Huzur gumashta and full opportunity for making a defence not afforded; that he had

[1] Goldingham to BOR, para. 2, 27 October, 1838, *GDR* (70: 5394: 281–9).
[2] ibid. para. 1–4.
[3] ibid. para. 4.

experienced hardship in trying to gain an interview with the Collector by following him around the district; and finally, that after serving the Government for many years, he was being dismissed for the mischief committed by someone else (Reddi Rao) while none of the other salt servants had been dismissed.[1]

When on 11 October 1838, the Collector was ordered to submit the original proceedings on the case, he did his best to refute the arguments of the ex-Amin. He felt that 'the real motive which dictated the appeal [was] not a sense of having been unjustly dealt with but a desire to place the then Officiating Head Sheristadar in an unfavourable position before the Board', as was indicated in almost every paragraph of the appeal. During the famine, some witnesses had been forced to steal in order to live. Sheep had been found on a road and taken. It was the responsibility of the Collector to prevent wastage of salt and the sale of salt by government officers for their own benefit. Reddi Rao may have begun the corrupting operations, but Vetsha Lakshmiah had carried these on and benefited by them. Lakshmiah had been dismissed from the Guntur Zillah in 1818 and from the Rajahmundry Zillah since then. The petitioner had simply been requested to go to Guntur to await final orders. Instead he had followed the Collector all over the district.[2]

Once again, on 6 May 1839, the Board of Revenue reversed the decision of the Collector. Inefficiency in the Salt Department was not new. Reports on trouble in Chinna Ganjam were chronic. Reddi Rao was the person who had really earned the bribe (though he had not collected and Lakshmiah had). Ignoring the recent 20 per cent increase in salt revenues,[3] the Board could only dwell on the suspicious nature of the evidence and conclude that 'the charge was not proved'.[4] While 'refraining from directing his restoration to the appointment from which he was dismissed', the Board nevertheless desired that Lakshmiah should 'not be considered ineligible for future employment and that he be provided with a suitable place on the occurrence of an opportunity'.[5]

[1] Goldingham to BOR, paras. 4–7, 27 October 1838, *GDR* (5394: 281–9).
[2] Goldingham to BOR, paras. 1–8, 27 October 1837, *GDR* (5394: 281–9).
[3] Compare *Jamabandi Report*, Fasli 1246, para. 42, 2 February 1838, *GDR* (5394: 32–63), with *Jamabandi Report*, Fasli 1247, para. 27, 6 September 1838, *GDR* (5394: 182–206). [4] Extract from BOR *Proceedings*, 6 May 1839, *GDR* (5370: 91–95).
[5] ibid. para. 8. *Note:* The case of Vuddum Venkatachallam, dismissed Salt

Then there was Vetsha Bashacharlu, the Head English Writer who was demoted for setting off fireworks in the dead of night during *Diwali* (The Festival of Lights) to intimidate a delinquent caste member scheduled to give testimony against his uncles, Dharmapuri and Lakshmiah. Moreover, he took illicit presents from the Sattanapalli Zamindar and he bribed and bullied other witnesses in the cases against his uncles.

Bashacharlu resigned and appealed to the Board of Revenue. He blamed machinations of the Sabnavis people, improper hearings without opportunity for defence, unfair discrimination, and so on. He submitted a bundle of alibis, character references, and testimonials. These revealed, incidentally, how often he had been in and out of district service.

When the Board wrote that Bashacharlu 'should have been at once dismissed from Office and not merely removed to a lower position' where he had no chance to clear his character,[1] the Collector replied that the man on the spot was in a better position than the Board in Madras to know and judge the circumstances. In his words,

> Experience has shown that the majority of sentences passed under Regulation IX of 1822 are reversed on appeal. The Collector's authority is greatly weakened by this and injury inflicted on the country. It is the unhappy lot of society that two people seldom view the same thing in the same light. Appeals have to contend against this and have the further disadvantage that the evidence as it lies before the Appellate Tribunal is little better than a lifeless map.[2]

The character of persons involved, the manner in which evidence was presented, the subtle motives and other vital facets could not be understood or appreciated from hundreds of miles away. It was enough that his own mind was made up as to the various and contradictory stories which had come out of his careful probing. Perhaps he had been too lenient in not dismissing Bashacharlu; but 'if the subject [were] closely scrutinized by the Board with reference to the important principles of upholding the character of the office and the interests of the people', they would realize

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Dafadar of Chinna Ganjam, was decided in the same way on 16 May 1839, *GDR* (5370: 133–4); moreover, the question of re-employment came up in the Register of Petitions, 22 February 1841; *GDR* (5372: 162–3).

[1] BOR *Proceedings*, para. 5, 25 March 1839, *GDR* (5370: 75–78).

[2] Goldingham to BOR, para. 14, 5 June 1839, *GDR* (29: 5397: 49–63).

that removing Bashacharlu from a responsible and potentially dangerous position was more important than whether or not he were punished.[1] Many other arguments, supported with depositions, were put forward by the Collector. Obvious falsehoods and contradictions in the Appeal Petition were pointed out. Corroborative evidence by the private secretary (*butadunavis*), relatives and servants of the Zamindar was reinforced with a petition (*arzi*) from the Zamindar himself.

Goldingham clearly suspected that dark conspiracies connected with the growing struggle for possession of the warehouse-full of cloth goods in Amaravati lay behind the whole matter. Bashacharlu 'had joined the party whose sole object through intrigue was to deprive Government of the services of the late Acting Sheristadar, knowing well that his straightforward and upright character was striking at the root of that corrupt system which [was doing] so much injury to this district'.[2]

Again the Board did not appreciate the Collector's defence. Proof of guilt was not, in their opinion, conclusive, nor were the explanations satisfactory. They did not, however, press Goldingham further.[3]

All currents did not flow in one direction. At least one victim of actions by the Nyapati faction returned to Government favour. Vungamulu Subha Rao, Revenue Peshkar of Chebrole, began to come under pressure from the Huzur clique in 1834. Yelta Pragada Rao became Thanadar. Ghanagamu Venkatasham, the Sheristadar's brother and Amin of Bapatla, told Patrick Grant that Subha Rao 'was in the habit of robbing the Company'.[4] Later, another complaint was laid before Alexander Bruce. Subha Rao was dismissed on 4 April 1836. He sent five appeals to the Board of Revenue before his case was reconsidered and his dismissal confirmed. Ten more appeals to Madras brought no results. Subha Rao went to Calcutta where his plea was finally heard. Returning to Guntur, he waited until 1838 before he addressed yet anothet desperate-sounding plea to the Government of India: 'Trusting that you would write to the Governor of

[1] Goldingham to BOR, para. 15, 5 June 1839, ibid. [2] ibid. para. 18.
[3] Extraxt of BOR *Proceedings*, paras. 1–3, 27 June 1838, *GDR* (5370: 161–3).
[4] Extract from T. W. Maddock, Officiating Secretary to Government of India (with parts of Subha Rao's petition, para. 3), to GOM, sent on to Goldingham, 3 December 1838, *GDR* (5370: 22–28).

Madras telling him to give me some situation, I immediately returned home according to your orders; but I have not yet benefited from your promise. I am in great distress and do not know how to obtain the common necessities of life and shall starve unless you have the goodness to befriend me.'[1] This time his case slowly moved down the long bureaucratic ladder. Early in 1839, the Collector was asked to look into the matter. Goldingham found that grevious injustice had been done to Subha Rao in his 'permanent removal'.[2] On 22 July the Government wrote that it was 'pleased to permit the re-employment of this individual in the public service'.[3]

The Register of Petitions during this period contained many other similar cases. Karnams, Samatdars, Maddatgars, Gumashtas and other officers petitioned the Board whenever their interests were damaged or their purposes hampered.

Some idea of the attitude which then prevailed in the Board of Revenue toward the enforcement of Regulation IX of 1822 may be gathered from a circular letter which Goldingham received on 2 August 1839. The Board noted that while some Collectors had probably been too lax, most Collectors were considered to be too free in their enforcement of discipline . . . often when it was not expedient. In their opinion, 'Where . . . a charge may be supported by a reasonable prima facie evidence and susceptible of proof and is at the same time of a magnitude to require a severe penalty, the Collector should avail himself of the powers conferred . . . to check by a public example frauds and malversation among a class of men who possess great facilities of carrying on their malpractices without detection.'[4] But trifling cases involving no severe penalty, even if proved, were better dealt with under the general authority of the Collector. Attention was called by the Board to 'the great want of care and regularity frequently observed', in the work of Collectors:[5] '. . . the evidence [was] often . . . quite

[1] Excerpt from Subha Rao's Petition, in T. W. Maddock to GOM, para. 4, 3 December 1838, *GDR* (5370: 22–28).

[2] Goldingham to Chief Secretary of GOM, 17 May 1839, *GDR* (5397: 43–45).

[3] Chief Secretary to Collector to Guntur Zillah, 22 July 1839, *GDR* (5370: 172–3).

[4] BOR Secretary [Circular Letter] to Collector of Guntur Zillah, para. 3, 15 July, 1839, *GDR* (5370: 174–7), dispatched 30th received 2 August. The BOR Secretary was Patrick Smollett.

[5] ibid. para. 5.

inadequate, a circumstance which would appear to have arisen from a neglect to take and record evidence forthcoming or from confusion and want of method in the manner of recording it, rather than from a real deficiency of witnesses and documents to support the charges.'[1] A strict adherence to forms implied no defect on essential points. Clear and satisfactory grounds for a decision 'such as would be found sufficient to support the conviction in the event of an appeal to the regular tribunals' was what the Board wanted from its Collectors.[2]

[1] BOR Secretary, para. 5. [2] ibid. para. 6.

X

CONFLICT WITHIN THE SECRETARIAT, 1839–1842

FACTIONAL strife continued to mount in intensity throughout the remainder of Goldingham's term of service in Guntur. The Nyapati party, which controlled much of the machinery of district government, sought to maintain and strengthen its influence over subsidiary groups and village leaders. At the same time, it tried to prevent any disclosure of infidelity which might weaken its position in Madras. The Sabnavis party, which possessed the support of the Collector, attempted to frustrate these designs, to lay bare misconduct, and to break the control of the entrenched group. In this conflict, determined efforts were made by both groups to gain and keep control of the machinery within the secretariat departments. And when necessary, each party looked for help outside the headquarters, and even outside the district.

Although his authority was by-passed and his power to remove subordinates, nullified by appeals to the Board of Revenue, Goldingham fought to preserve what remained of his influence and to carry on his work. He brought Muhammad Gahub in as Head Assistant of the Sherista Department[1] and Krishna-Rao as Head Munshi (or *Jawabnavis*).[2] These two officers served as a counter-poise to the old elite for about a year. The Collector never stopped pressing for the promotion of Krishna Rao. In February 1840, he succeeded in moving Nakkalapalli Subha Rao to an Aminship in the field and promptly made Krishna Rao Naib Sheristadar.[3]

The Collector and the Naib Sheristadar then proceeded to dog the steps of the Huzur Sheristadar. Each time Shashagiri Rao

[1] *Elliot Report*, para. 55, 17 April 1846, loc. cit. (281: 20: 7534).
[2] Goldingham to BOR, 29 April 1839, *GDR* (22: 5397: 42).
[3] *Elliot Report*, op. cit.

failed to carry out instructions, more work was delegated to Krishna Rao. By the end of 1840, Krishna Rao was performing many of the duties of the Head Sheristadar. Two voices were translating and implementing orders, cancelling out each other with their clamour. Intrigue and counter-intrigue moved beneath the surface. 'A mortal enmity was produced between [Krishna Rao] and Shashagherry Row, who could not brook being set aside.'[1] Since only Krishna Rao seemed to be carrying out the regular business of the district and since Shashagiri Rao seemed to be doing nothing, Goldingham lost all patience with what he thought to be nothing more than open hostility and shambling incompetence.

Late in November 1840, the formal positions of the two factional leaders were again reversed. Goldingham made Krishna Rao Huzur Sheristadar and Shashagiri Rao Naib. He sent his reasons to Madras. Shashagiri Rao sent his own appeal against this action.

The Board lost no time in disapproving of the Collector's action, citing the Government's previous ruling on the subject. 'Regular charges' against Shashagiri Rao would have to be proved and then submitted according to prescribed rules. Krishna Rao was not to remain as 'Head of the Office'. Nyapati Shashagiri Rao returned to his place of authority.[2]

Throughout 1841, while Goldingham carefully worked up his case against Shashagiri Rao, tension mounted. Each side grappled for the upper hand. Each sought to prevent the other from governing the district. The Collector shuffled personnel so as to give more influence and better pay to the Naib Sheristadar and Head Munshi and their supporters. But his superiors in Madras overruled his efforts to manipulate the establishment (*muainzabita*), as violating set rules of pay and procedure.[3] At the end of 1841, one fact clearly emerged. Both side plainly revealed that a controversy of great bitterness had shaken the Secretariat for a long time, with neither party gaining much advantage.[4]

[1] op. cit.
[2] BOR to Goldingham, 7 December 1840, *GDR* (5370: 238–9).
[3] BOR *Proceedings*, 24 May 1841: *GDR* (5373: 213–15). BOR Secretary to Chief Secretary, 29 July 1841; Minutes of Consultation, 2 September and BOR to Goldingham, 13 September 1841, *GDR* (5372–532).
[4] Goldingham to BOR, 19 October 1841, *GDR* (5399: 83–133).

Whether or not the Palnad Amins (of Dachapalli and Timmurukota) actually conspired together with the Huzur Sheristadar, to secure a postponement of a substantial portion of the land revenue on false grounds, and whether or not the Collector and his Naib sprang a cleverly laid trap on the Huzur Sheristadar cannot be determined with finality. Probably both the conspiracy and the trap were planned. Shashagiri Rao helped the Amins in their scheme, probably with a view to embarrassing Goldingham. But after his arrangements for postponing the revenue were completed, Goldingham was tipped off. A quick stealthy trip was made to the Palnad. False accounts were discovered and testimony from taluk and village officers was recorded.[1]

Hearing of this, Shashagiri Rao completely reversed himself. Until then, he had stoutly maintained that the Palnad accounts were accurate and that its administration was efficient. Now he accused the Sabnavis party of drumming up grounds for removing him from office. He was certain that false accounts for this purpose had been prepared right in the Huzur Cutcherry. He was no longer as informed as he should be because district officers walked in fear of the Naib Sheristadar. Normal business could no longer be done openly in the presence of the Collector. Had he not warned the Collector in a special memorandum (*hukum*) not to depend upon the Palnad accounts? Yet the Collector had sent the very orders which granted a revenue postponement. He had seen the orders in the Diary with his own eyes. Suspecting a trap, he had ordered the village leaders to put their accounts before him and, finding them in order, he had initialled them as a special precaution. A systematic removal of his friends from district offices had been going on for over a year and now it was his turn. Walled about by secrecy, denied access to the Jamabandi Reports and to the English Records,[2] the Huzur Sheristadar felt cut off from the normal exercise of his duty.[3]

Goldingham was sure that there was no secrecy about the day-to-day business of the Cutcherry. Any 'flying reports' and rumours heard by the Huzur Sheristadar simply indicated that he was not as much in the dark as he claimed. How could Shashgiri Rao

[1] Collector's Proceedings and Report to BOR, 19 October 1841, *GDR* (5399 84, 88–97, 104–49).

[2] See next section for a fuller analysis of the Record Department.

[3] Goldingham to BOR, *GDR* (49: 5399: 102, 105–7, 112).

declare that most cutcherry secrets were fully known in Guntur Town and still claim that he was being kept in the dark? It was obvious to the Collector, that what supposedly had been 'purposely kept back' had long been known to the Huzur Sheristadar.[1]

No one in the Munshi Department could help but know what was going on, Goldingham argued. One person wrote all orders. Another entered all orders in the Diary. Still another registered all orders. Others registered petitions and all other business. All the work of the department was examined by the Head Munshi. An order to Amins could not possibly be sent without being recorded in the Diary and in the Register. Anyone could see, wrote Goldingham, that no such orders had been sent, for none were recorded. Diaries were in the handwriting of clerks in the office. Consecutive numbering on each page and the Collector's initials at the close of each day's entries made falsification almost impossible: 'The whole Moonshi Department would have to have been of one mind to effect such an object [as fabrication]. It is not to be supposed that the whole Department was tampered with. Even if they had been, my initials at the end of each day's work is conclusive evidence that the allegations are false. Surely, public time ought not to have been wasted by taking vain depositions of this character.'[2] To Goldingham the idea that normal business could be carried on with deliberate secrecy was ridiculous.

Shashagiri Rao was accused of allowing unfinished business to accumulate. A total of 4,212 unfinished cases had accumulated during sixteen months between October 1838, and February 1840. According to the story told to Goldingham by the Naib Sheristadar and by the Head Munshi (Vinugunti Ramadas), the day had finally come when the Huzur Sheristadar had 'thrown down his sunnud of appointment before the Naib',[3] declared that he was unable to keep up with the work, and asked the Naib to take over the current business. During the next ten months, while Krishna Rao had tried to cope with the backlog which had fallen onto his mat,[4] only 5 out of 104 new cases assigned to Shashagiri Rao had

[1] *GDR* (49: 5399: 102–3, 108).
[2] Goldingham to BOR, op. cit. (pp. 112–13).
[3] ibid. (p. 83).
[4] *Note:* Office staff sat on grass mats—on the floor around the walls of each room, with writing-boards on their laps and piles of *daftars* (files tied by red tape) beside them. Only superiors had low 'desks' in front of them.

been disposed of. Another 110 cases given to the Huzur Sheristadar during 1841 had yet to be touched. In all, Shashagiri Rao was still holding over 200 cases of unfinished business. Paraga Ramana Rao, the Head Maddatgar, and Yeddlapalem Ramana Rao, the Head Salt Maddatgar, supported the Head Munshi, the Naib, and the Collector in this view.[1]

It is apparent that the Huzur and Naib Sheristadars did not work together, as would normally have been the case. Their relative positions had again been reversed. The main business was going through Krishna Rao and his assistants instead of through Shashagiri Rao. Because of this, Shashagiri Rao claimed that he had no way of knowing about irregular practices, much less having means to remedy maladministration. Without a voice in the selection of new officers, or in the assignment of positions, or in the delegation of work, his power was greatly restricted. He claimed that while the Naib was much 'overesteemed'[2] government officers no longer listened to him.

Goldingham did not deny the lack of co-operation in the Cutcherry. He argued, 'I yield that the Naib Sheristadar is the enemy of the Hoozoor Sheristadar; but I will not admit that the Hoozoor Sheristadar cannot obtain proof because the persons who might give evidence will not tell the truth for fear of the Naib'.[3] The Sheristadar was not ignored, disobeyed, and deserted; for he was always 'well attended by able *Goomastahs*'.[4]

Goldingham attributed much of the real trouble to intrigue. Many Nayapati supporters were in the Cutcherry and within the Sheristakhana itself. Both parties had plotted and conspired against each other until the business of government had come to a standstill. Magic charms (*pujas*) were performed; dark and terrible incantations (*mantrams*) were chanted; and horrifying spells were invoked. Evils spirits were propitiated with the hope of bringing Krishna Rao and his friends to harm. No doubt similar 'black magic' and other psychological instruments were applied to the Nyapati party as well. Resort to methods of terror by both sides brought panic to many subordinate officers and did much to disturb morale.[5]

[1] Goldingham to BOR, op. cit. (p. 84). *Note:* What the Naib Munshi, who was Shashagiri Rao's brother-in-law, might have testified is not recorded (pp. 101, 111).
[2] Goldingham to BOR, 19 October 1841, *GDR* (49: 5399: 86).
[3] ibid. (p. 90). [4] ibid. (p. 91). *Note:* A *Gumashta* was a bookkeeper or clerk.
[5] Goldingham to BOR, 19 October 1841, *GDR* (49: 5399: 85 and 119).

What undoubtedly provoked John Goldingham most of all was the discovery that Shashagiri Rao communicated secretly with the Board of Revenue and with his European friends in Madras. Using his contacts and channels in Nellore and Rajahmundry and Masulipatam, the Huzur Sheristadar kept up a steady flow of information by which he calculated to win support for himself and weaken confidence in the Collector: '[Shashagiri Rao] adopted a highly improper course of conduct in forwarding in a clandestine manner through the post offices in the Nellore District to the Board, petitions relative to the state of the management in this District.'[1] Whisperings and rumours seeping into the bungalows at Madras—gossip of household servants overheard, words from a barber cutting the hair of a *Dora* (European Lord) on his verandah, hearsay, from some *chaprasi* (badge wearing messenger) at the door of an office—these could be very potent weapons. Goldingham's mind was disturbed because these items 'proceeded from a vindictive spirit without regard for the truth'.[2]

Control of records was vital if a dominating influence was to be exerted within an administration. Rulers had to have accurate and detailed information, arranged in an orderly fashion for quick reference. Prestige, efficiency, and justice in government depended upon records. The length if not the strength of the arm of State required a quick, accurate and long memory. The same truth applied to any group wishing to command a dominating influence within an administration. Silent tampering and skilful manipulating could strengthen a bureaucracy at the expense of the State.

The *Daftarkhana* (Record Office) had already come under the disapproving eyes of the Board of Revenue on previous occasions. As recently as November 1836, much confusion and unfinished work had been brought to light.[3] Even the Court of Directors had remarked at the 'disgrace' and asked for a periodic report on the condition of records.[4]

Goldingham not only found the records in great disorder but he found evidence that they were being deliberately altered. Extracts of *maniam* titles did not match their originals and newly made

[1] Goldingham to BOR, (p. 85). [2] ibid.
[3] ibid. (p. 87). See also *MRP* (281: 21: 8261), No. 41 of 6 December 1847.
[4] Extract of *Despatch* No. 8 of 19 April 1837, *GDR* (5368: 291–3), from Court of Directors, passed on by Government and BOR to Collector.

maniam titles were found inserted among old ones. The staff protested that copies and extracts from records and duplicates of titles (on stamp paper) had always been prepared within the Record Office before being sent for the Collector's signature, a procedure which made it difficult to check copies against their originals. The validity of an extract rested almost solely upon the word of officers in the record rooms; but since all the office staff had general access to the Record Office and easy communication with the Record Keepers, even proper efforts to obtain efficiency would have failed.[1]

There were two *Daftardars*.[2] The senior officer was the English Record Keeper, Kotamaraj Venkata Rayalu. He was a Nyapati supporter of thirty-five years experience, appointed by Thomas Oakes in 1818. The second officer was the Native (Vernacular) Record Keeper, Nonsherwan, of whom we know little. The Record Office staff was divided into two sections working under the Daftardars. The *Daftarband* (Records Guard) of the vernacular section was a Sabnavis partisan named Sheik Maikhtum. Of the rest of the staff we know little except that the two volunteer assistants were divided, as also were the two sections, by the factionalism which prevailed in Cutcherry.[3]

What went on in the Record Department was as crucial to the interest of both factions as to the power of the Government. To be able to arrange or disarrange records to suit their own purposes, to know how to reproduce records and put spurious copies either in the files or on the market, indeed, to have entire access and custody over records: such were matters of concern to both factions. Besides, there were always petitioners, litigators, and local leaders who were willing to pay in order that the scales of justice or the balance of influence might be tipped and weighted in their own favour.

Convinced that the efficiency of management and supervision over the Daftarkhana should be increased, Goldingham put some

[1] Goldingham to BOR, 19 October 1841, *GDR* (49: 5399: 121). *Maniam:* land granted to hereditary village officers in lieu of salary.

[2] The application of Munro's 'double daftar'—setting members of opposing communities or factions as a check on each other requires a full study by itself; but the practice appears to have operated under Goldingham. K. Ballhatchet, *Social Policy and Social Change in Western India: 1817–1830* (London: Oxford University Press, 1957), p. 92, deals with this notion.

[3] Appendix F of *Elliot's Report* to BOR, 17 April 1846, *MRP* (281: 21: 8170–1), No. 29 of 6 December 1847.

new rules in the force within the Cutcherry on 20 July 1838. Henceforth, copying and extracting were not to be done in the record rooms. Original documents were to be sent straight to the Collector and he would direct the Sherista Department or the Munshi Department to take charge of reproduction. Extracts were to be made under the signature of the Head Munshi and any other chief officer concerned with the specific subject of the extract. None but the Daftardars and their staff were to enter the Daftarkhana unless given special permission by the Collector. The *Daftarbands* (Guards) were to register the names of persons whom they permitted to enter the Record Office.[1]

While these reforms were certainly sound from an administrative point of view, they also served the interests of the Naib Sheristadar. Heretofore, his designs within the Daftarkhana had been hazardous, all operations having to pass under the suspicious and vigilant eye of Kotamaraj Venkata Rayalu. Once the records were sent up to his office, however, Krishna Rao hoped to have a free hand. But in this he was disappointed. The Records staff under Venkata Rayalu's guiding hand dallied, delayed, and obstructed. Goldingham kept a close eye on documents which came up from the Record Office. Forced into more devious methods, Krishna Rao made use of one of the Daftarbands. According to both Venkata Rayalu and Shashagiri Rao, records were taken into the town at night and returned to their shelves before the Cutcherry opened (probably before ten o'clock) in the morning. In this way 'whole books were copied afresh' and alterations were inserted freely.[2]

Strife in the Daftarkhana finally broke into the open in 1840. Each side charged the other with having engaged in wholesale fraud for two or three years.[3] Both parties accused each other of taking records home at night. The terrible confusion in departmental work and records was attributed to frequent removals and replacings. Deliberate attempts to frustrate administration had been made by both factions in their attempts to grapple with each other.

A story told by Kotamaraj Venkata Rayalu, even if false, is

[1] Appendix F of *Elliot's Report* to BOR, 17 April 1846, MRP, (281: 21: 8172–3). Goldingham to BOR (Question 122), 19 October 1841, *GDR* (49: 5399: 121–4).

[2] Appendix F of *Elliot Report*, op. cit. (281: 21: 8172). And Goldingham to BOR, op. cit. (49: 5399: 130).

[3] Goldingham to BOR, ibid. (pp. 123–9).

illustrative. One afternoon he had seen the son of Sheikh Maikhtum, the Daftarband, in close conversation with two Vaishnavite Brahmans under the trees outside the Cutcherry. Suspecting that something was afoot, he had locked up and given the appearance of leaving for home. The Daftarband's son and the Brahmans had soon entered the building and opened a file of records (*daftaramu*). Entering the room quickly, he had caught them looking over some papers, but had been unable to get satisfactory explanations. The following morning, these same Brahmans had presented a petition laying claim to four *kuchelas* (or about 30 acres) of land in Narainilapalli, a village in Rachur Thana. Namburi Krishniah, a Sabnavis partisan who was Amin of Guntur Thana, had insolently ordered the necessary documents for the Naib Sheristadar, documents which looked suspiciously as if they had been altered.[1]

In the confusion of charges and counter-charges Goldingham could discover little more than that chaos and corruption existed. Wholesale tampering could not have been done without support from leaders in the Sheristakhana. The great backlog of work had merely added confusion and facilitated tampering. He could not separate the guilty from the non-guilty. He considered dismissing the entire staff of the Daftarkhana and employing specially selected officers to straighten up the department and to arrange the records properly. When this suggestion was put before the Board early in 1842, it was turned down. The Board would not recommend such a measure 'without the fullest conviction of its absolute necessity',[2] a conviction which they did not share.

Thus, little was done to remedy the situation and the Daftarkhana continued in the same state of confusion. Both factions possessed friends in the Record Office. Records required by the Sherista Department needed only a requisition slip signed by the Sheristadar. Those required by the Munshi and Magistrate Departments, needed an order signed by the Collector; but he signed or often allowed the Naib Sheristdar to sign as a matter of course.[3] Both sides could accomplish their own purposes to the detriment of sound administration.

[1] Appendix F of *Elliot Report*, op. cit. (281: 21: 8173–4).

[2] BOR *Proceedings* (on Collector's letter of 24 January 1842), No. 9 of 24 February 1842, *GDR* (5373: 103–4).

[3] *Elliot Report*, para. 95, loc. cit. Goldingham to BOR, 19 October 1841, *GDR* (49: 5399: 103, 126–7).

In the end, the various papers, depositions, and reports recording the views of both sides in this bitter and protracted dispute were laid before the Board of Revenue. Given a choice between the report of the Collector and the deposition of the Huzur Sheristadar, the Board of Revenue predictably overruled Goldingham completely and wholly supported Shashagiri Rao. The Board rebuked Goldingham for his treatment of Shashagiri Rao and for permitting Krishna Rao to exercise so much power and influence within the Secretariat. Since Krishna Rao had taken advantage of the trust placed in him by the Collector, he was to be suspended and various charges made against him were to be investigated. Goldingham was not to employ Krishna Rao in the Huzur again in any capacity. Shashagiri Rao was to be reinstated and restored to his full powers as Huzur Sheristadar.[1] The Board recognized, however, that the bitter animosity between Goldingham and Shashagiri Rao could only be detrimental to the whole administration of the district. If an equivalent post could be found for Shashagiri Rao in some other district and if a fully qualified person could be found to take his place, the interest of Company authority inclined the Board to listen to any suggestions which might be forthcoming.[2]

Were we to record details of every struggle which occurred during this long, drawn, and bitter conflict within the Secretariat, space for words would run short and the clamour itself, dull and monotonous with repetition. It is sufficient simply to indicate that both factions now turned to outside help, bringing in allies to aid them in what they did not feel they could do for themselves. Brief descriptions of the actions of two of these helpers, one representing each side, serve to show the nature of the conflict during the last days of Goldingham's regime in Guntur.

Kotur Rayal Naidu launched an attack against Krishna Rao. He was a District Munsif whose enmity against the Sabnavis faction had provoked a 'spirit of malice' for ten years.[3] Although himself under investigation for a deficiency in his cash box, the Munsif presented a petition charging Krishna Rao and his friends with

[1] BOR to Goldingham, *MRP* (MRO: pp. 15678–16011), No. 15 of 11 November 1841.

[2] BOR to Goldingham, ibid. (pp. 18799–805), No. 16 of December 16 1841.

[3] Sadr Adalat *Proceedings*, 22 April 1833; also quoted in *Elliot Report*, para. 56, op. cit.

conspiracy to bring false accusations against himself, with malversation in the amount of Rs. 40,000, and with not paying the full salaries of a number of officers.[1] The Court Sheristadar (Namagadda Narasinga Ramakrishnamah), the Manager of the Magistrate Department, the Amin of Chabrolu (Tota Krishnama), the Head Assistant Sheristadar (J. A. Somayajulu Subhiah), the Huzur Maddatgar (Ambarkhana Purushothum, Shashagiri Rao's son-in-law) and others supported this charge.[2]

In February of 1841, Goldingham was asked to forward information on the petition of Rayal Naidu. In complying, Goldingham pointed out that the petition arose out of 'a vindictive feeling'.[3] The charges had been planned in consultation with the Huzur Sheristadar, 'the Monsiff having been engaged in suborning false evidence to support what he had set forth in the accusation'.[4] Goldingham remarked: '. . . it can be in extreme cases only that the conduct of a public officer in the Judicial line, as the District moonsiff is, can be justified in standing forth as a Public accuser of a high Revenue Servant, soliciting not the usual mode of enquiry . . . but requiring a Commission of Enquiry and all this with a personal charge only, or rather, a general statement that "charges will be preferred".'[5] He felt that the petition should 'be treated as it [deserved]' and forgotten.[6]

However, the matter was not fogotten; for while the Board deeemed it 'unnecessary to pursue the matter further' and indicated their disapproval of Rayal Naidu, charges and countercharges continued to be made.[7] Ultimately, the Sadr Adalat pronounced charges against Rayal Naidu 'to be the result of combination and intrigue' coming from acts which 'justly gained him the applause of his superiors' and appointed him to a better position in another district.[8] In 1843, after a special investigation, the Assistant Judge of Guntur (Henry Wood) declared that the charges against Krishna Rao were to be 'assigned to the spirit of faction existing in the district' and should be dismissed.[9] By that time, however, Goldingham had been gone from the district for some time.

[1] Goldingham to BOR, para. 4, 24 March 1841, *GDR* (5399: 28–32).
[2] Goldingham to BOR, para. 2, 24 March 1841, *GDR* (5399: 28–32). *Elliot Report* to BOR, para. 56, 17 April 1846, op. cit.
[3] ibid. para. 3.
[4] ibid.
[5] lbid. para. 6.
[6] ibid. para. 3.
[7] BOR to Goldingham, paras. 1 and 2, 15 April 1841, *GDR* (5372: 451).
[8] *Elliot Report* to BOR, para. 56, 17 April 1846, *MRP* (281: 20: 7541).
[9] ibid. para. 56, p. 7542. See also Goldingham to BOR, 11 August 1841, *GDR* (5399: 50–51).

The prohibition against Krishna Rao's working in the Huzur being as definite as it was, a new force was thrown into the struggle against Nyapati Shashagiri Rao and his faction. Taking advantage of the Board's willingness to consider some other arrangement for Shashagiri Rao, Goldingham moved him to an Aminship, also transferred Krishna Rao into the field, and wrote to the Board nominating Manganuri Lakshminarsu Rao, a Sabnavis ally from outside the district, to become Head of the Office.

Lakshminarsu Rao was an experienced Desastha who had 'served the Company for twenty-seven years'.[1] Coming into the service at the time Thomas Oakes had been trying to bring factional strife under control, Lakshminarsu had served at one time or another in all the revenue departments. During the salt scandals, which had afflicted Guntur and Nellore in 1817, he had been Head Assistant to the Investigating Committee, composed of John Vaughan and John Anstey—nor was he backward about taking credit for the work. In 1826, he had gone to Nellore and for over seven years had been either a field or a headquarters Sheristadar. Under Christopher Thompson, Edward Smalley, and John Whish, his reputation had grown. Whish had wanted him to be Huzur Sheristadar of Nellore and George Russell had recommended him to the Collector of Rajahmundry. As Shashagiri Rao's successor in Rajahmundry, Lakshminarsu had assisted Patrick Grant in uncovering 'glaring abuses' in the Salt Department. But after Grant's departure, he had refused a Rs. 70 writership as unbecoming to his dignity and experience and had resigned.[2]

When Manganuri Lakshminarsu Rao was offered the Huzur Sheristadarship of Guntur in November 1841, the cautious old Desastha visited the members of the Board of Revenue to see how his nomination would be received. Receiving assurances, he set out for Guntur and arrived on 16 December. That very day, a letter was dispatched from the Board of Revenue refusing to confirm Goldingham's arrangements either for the new nomination or for the placement of Shashagiri Rao. Without offering any concrete suggestions, the Board simply stated that adequate

[1] Goldingham to BOR, 28 January 1842. *MRP* (MRO: 1850: 16999–17013), No. 27 of 10 February 1842. This includes letter by M. Lakshminarsu Rao.

[2] Appendix A of Goldingham's letter to BOR (containing history and references of Manganuri Lakshminarsu Rao dated for 21 December 1841), 28 January 1842, *MRP* (MRO: 1850: 16999–17013), No. 27 of 10 February 1842.

provision for a person of such ability and experience as Shashagiri Rao had not been made.[1]

The inexplicable action of the Board in reversing their earlier position was received by the Collector with consternation and embarrassment. (A glance at the *India Register* of 1841 will show that there were two changes in permanent membership and two temporary members serving the Board of Revenue at this time.) He informed Lakshimarsu of the Board's decision and offered him the Naib Sheristadarship—a position worth only Rs. 70 a month. Lakshminarsu refused saying that he did not want to work '. . . especially under Nyapaty Sheshagherry Row who was formerly employed in the Magistrate Department for most of his whole service and is not considered a very clever revenue servant'.[2]

In remonstrating with the Board of Revenue, Goldingham explained that he had already put the Board's suggestions of 11 November into effect. The new orders of 16 December placed him 'in great difficulty'. Had not the Board agreed that the services of Shashagiri Rao 'could no longer be beneficially exercised in his present situation'?[3] Had not Lakshminarsu even been advised by the Board to be 'careful and obedient' in his new appointment? How, then, could the Board have changed its mind so suddenly? 'These circumstances', he wrote, 'added to my responsibility for the public interest place me in a position of greatest perplexity.'[4]

Again Goldingham appealed to the Government. But again he was reminded that the Government could only be consulted through proper channels. He explained that Krishna Rao had only been used to counter the foot-dragging of Shashagiri Rao. Krishna Rao was now gone and if Lakshminarsu were also removed, 'the public interest would be abandoned'.[5] The fact that the Vasireddy Zamindari was about to come under *amani* management made the problem particularly critical. Administration demanded more in a Huzur Sheristadar than a person who possessed 'not even the ordinary qualifications':[6] 'I beg you to

[1] BOR to Goldingham, *MRP* (MRO: pp. 18799–805), No. 16 of 16 December 1841.

[2] Appendix A of *Goldingham Report* to BOR, 28 January 1842, *MRP* (MRO: 16999–17013), No. 27 of 10 February 1842.

[3] Goldingham to BOR, para. 2, 28 January 1842, ibid. [4] ibid. para. 3.

[5] Goldingham to BOR, para. 2, 28 January 1842, *MRP* (MRO: pp. 16999–17013), No. 27 of 10 February 1842. [6] ibid.

appoint Mungannury Latchmenarsoo as Head Sheristadar. To reinstate Nyapaty Shashagherry Row is tantamount to the removal of responsibility from the Collector, which the Board should wish to preserve.'[1] To turn against Lakshminarsu would be unjust treatment to an old servant. To allow Shashagiri Rao to control Guntur, until a proper position were found for him, would be folly since the Sheristadar had no wish to leave and since no other district would employ such an officer.[2]

This final plea by Goldingham made the Board all the more adamant. They rebuked him, first, for not furnishing them with a copy of his communication to the Government and, second, for including private conversations which Lakshminarsu had held with Board members within the appendix of an official (Government) communication, a practice which the Board found highly offensive. Any further attempt to remove Shashagiri Rao was completely out of the question.[3]

Dispute, contention, struggle, and conflict on many subjects and in many forms, occurring at every level of the hierarchy and reaching almost every corner of the district, characterized all of the almost five years during which Goldingham was Collector of Guntur District. In summation, he failed to cope with Shashagiri Rao and his organized following: he failed to create an effective counter-poise to the entrenched party by his backing of Krishna Rao, and, finally, by his bringing Lakshminarsu Rao into the Secretariat.

But in wider perspective, a long and bitter struggle for power had occurred between factions of district officers, in which it was impossible their British superiors to remain aloof. Indeed, neither the Collector nor the Board of Revenue could help but become involved. Any attempts by a State officer to implement policy or to strengthen central control by measures calculated to increase efficiency was bound to commit him to the support of that group which seemed most likely to promote this end. Members of the Board of Revenue were just as bound, after their fashion, as was Goldingham, to pursue measures according to the situation as they saw it.

[1] Goldingham to BOR, para. 3. [2] ibid. para. 2.
[3] BOR to Goldingham, *MRP* (MRO: pp. 16999–17013), No. 28 of 10 February 1842. Also *MRP* (280: 28: 436–9), Nos. 37 and 38 of 18 January 1842.

It becomes abundantly clear, therefore, that officers of the State (the Collector and the Board of Revenue) were as divided as the district officers whom they wished to control. Goldingham's efforts to bring reform and discipline to the administrative staff might have succeeded if he had been supported by the Board of Revenue and if he had been given a little more freedom to exercise his own judgement. In supporting the cause of the old elite, the Board of Revenue bent over backwards to ensure fairness and justice to district personnel. The Board was not as careful, during the period from 1837 to 1842, in supporting their Collector or in strengthening the ties of central control which might ensure efficiency in district administration. Unable to blunt the determination of the Collector or to bend him to their wishes, the Board's decisions created a stalemate and a paralysis of State control over Guntur. As a result, the old bureaucratic elite became stronger.

XI

THE COLLAPSE OF THE ZAMINDARI SYSTEM, 1837–1842

BEFORE proceeding further, it is necessary to touch briefly upon the apparent confusion which existed during the early nineteenth century with regard to the fundamental concepts upon which the administrative superstructure of Madras was built. Political, legal, and practical ideas, as well as deeper moral and philosophical views, were intermingled with varying degrees of knowledge and differing kinds of interpretation about very complex and diverse phenomena in the Indian subcontinent. This intermingling occurred in arguments over policy, reflecting what was in the minds of policy-makers, both in England and in India.

Information moved up the rungs of the administrative ladder from Guntur, being hammered and bent a little at each level. Decisions which were the product of disputation at the top of the ladder, in London, became twisted and mangled as they descended from level to level until they reached bottom, in Guntur. The practical carrying out of decisions equalled no more than the sum of this confused process, added to what authority, skill, and common sense happened to be (or not to be) possessed by the officer on the spot. Elements in the initiation, ratification, and implementation of policy are seldom precise or consistent.

This confused process of thinking, deciding, and acting confounded notions of land-tenure and ownership with the nature and function of zamindaris, as follows: First, land was (or ought to be) privately owned; such ownership, being as natural as the laws of Nature, ought to be protected and yet freed from as many arbitrary and artificial restrictions as possible; and political stability (in the *mufassal*) depended upon natural and hereditary lords of the land who commanded loyalty and respect from local people. Second, those powerful enough to guarantee security for the

cultivation of land and the production of wealth ought to share in the benefits of such enterprise; and hence the social and political stability and prosperity of the country depended upon a wise and efficient apportioning of wealth by the Government.[1]

Emphasis upon one or more of these ideas was not evenly distributed among officers within the administrative hierarchy. Roughly two schools of thought converged upon the Madras Governor-in-Council from below. Judicial authorities tended to think of the Proprietors and their Estates in legalistic and English terms. Rights of ownership occasionally were even imputed to Ryots and lowly cultivators. Forever faced with a backlog of litigation in cases of disputed succession, bad debts, and other claims against personal or family property, officers in the judicial line were somewhat removed from the heat and dust of the villages. (They were often accused of ignorance and incapacity.) Revenue authorities, on the other hand, possessed years of experience in managing zamindaris attached (*zafted*) for arrears and in trying to catch evasive village leaders. Officers of the revenue (and executive) line were not so prone to dwell upon the sacredness of private property. The Government's share of production (one-third) was much too large to be thought of in more than practical and administrative terms. The problem was not who owned the land but whether a proper share of the harvest went to each party having a claim upon it. If the Zamindar, who looked more like an autonomous revenue official (an Amildar) than a Proprietor, failed in the responsibilities delegated to him, it was up to the Government to make sure of its share of what was produced.

The Governor-in-Council were buffeted by both of these schools. Both were transmitted to London. The jobbing and intrigue for which Madras was notorious would suggest that

[1] A summary of these views may be found in J.W. Kaye, *The Administration of the East India Company* (London, 1853), pp. 202–33; A. L. Basham, *The Wonder that was India* (London, 1954), pp. 109, 191, holds that royal (State) ownership was a commonly held notion in ancient times but that *laissez-faire* philosophy of the nineteenth century tended to alter such interpretation. B. H. Baden-Powell, *Land-Systems of British India*, I (London, 1892), pp. 125, 197, 201, 291, discounts land ownership as such and supports the idea of concurrent interests in agricultural produce. Vera Anstey, *The Economic Development of India* (London, 1952), pp. 97–100, questions whether the concept of absolute land ownership existed. As far as Guntur is concerned, I support the second view. See chapters I and IV & V. *Note:* The above views were often blended in varying degrees, adding confusion to theoretical and practical manifestations of policy.

information and opinions supporting these ideas were also submitted privately (see chapter XIII).[1]

While both the Madras and London authorities were concerned with matters of immediate and practical expediency, such as financial and political stability (the corollary ideas shown above), the Home Authorities were more preoccupied with principles and rights and the Local Authorities were more concerned with actual conditions and practices. The Madras Government was more flexible and responsive to the immediate and contingent than was the Court of Directors. What happened if a local chief was treated without due respect could be seen in Vizagapatam, Kurnool, and Malabar. What happened if a local chief was treated with too much respect could be seen in Madura, Nellore, Guntur, and Rajahmundry. On the whole, the Court of Directors took a more tolerant view of the Zamindars, who caused disturbances and who defaulted on revenue, than did the Madras Government. At the same time, the Court was anything but tolerant with the local government for allowing such things to happen. In the background, while the Board of Control failed to show the same enthusiasm for the landed Proprietors as the Court, it did not hesitate to blame the Madras Government for its failings, particularly after 1845.

The Court of Directors adopted the experiment suggested by Alexander Bruce[2] (in 1836) of delivering the five attached zamindars of Guntur back into the hands of their legal 'owners' on the condition that they should manage their estates as Amildars (Revenue Officers) on behalf of the Government. Two months later, on 11 July 1838, the Court further explained its position to Madras authorities: 'We entirely approve of your instructions to the Collector to proportion your demand of Government to the

[1] When controversy over general revenue policy broke into the open in the 1850's a number of polemical writings were published. J. B. W. Dykes, *Salem, an Indian Collectorate* (London, 1853), is the best. Ironically, a revenue officer wrote against ryotwari and in favour of Zamindars and a Madras lawyer supporter ryotwari, though both denounced the Government. P. B. Smollet, *Madras: Its Civil Administration.* J. B. Norton, *A Letter to Robert Lowe on the Condition and Requirements of the Presidency of Madras* (Madras, 1854). Also Bourdillon, J. D. *Remarks on the Ryotwar System of Land Revenue as it Exists in the Presidency of Madras* (Madras, 1853).

[2] Bruce was one of those whom Elphinstone shunted into a relatively harmless post as Post-Master General and, later, as Civil Auditor.

means which the Zamindar may possess of discharging it, leaving the outstanding balances which have been occasioned by no neglect or default on his part for future adjustment.'[1] Appalled at the devastation of the famine and particularly at the two-thirds loss of population in the Sattanapalli Zamindari, the Directors argued that 'whenever the Proprietors [had] shown by their past conduct that they [were] competent to perform the duties required of them', it would be better to allow them to retain management of their estates than to put the management directly under Government officers.[2] It was not considered reasonable that the Zamindars should be lowered in the estimation of their people for a default which was 'in no wise attributable to them but owing solely to the unusually adverse nature of the season'.[3]

How the experiment of having Zamindars work as Amildars succeeded can be seen by tracing developments in Goldingham's administration. Part of the explanation behind the failure of the Zamindars to behave as proper revenue managers lies in the unrealistic arrangements for supervision which were made.

Goldingham's first *Jamabandi Report* (Fasli 1246: 1836–7), submitted on 3 February 1838, went into detail to show the incompetence of the Zamindars, their evasive and oppressive behaviour, and the utter unfitness of their diwans. He suggested that expenditure should be tightly limited, a strict accounting required, and a careful control of the zamindari personnel maintained. He was anything but satisfied with the direction the experiment was taking.[4]

Seven months later, on 2 August 1838, the Board of Revenue replied. After going to great lengths to defend the administration of the Zamindars and their servants, by quoting the favourable reports of Alexander Bruce and Malcolm Lewin,[5] the Board defined their position. The experiment had been entered upon with consideration and an awareness of the difficulties; but 'under certain restrictions and with a proper superintendence on the part of Officers of the District, the system [might] still be carried out with advantage'.[6] Orders given for insuring an efficient

[1] Extract of a *General Despatch* from the COD, paras, 71–72, 11 July, No. 10 of 1838, *GDR* (5370: 236–8). [2] ibid. [3] ibid.

[4] Goldingham (*Jamabandi Report*) to BOR, paras. 11–42, 60, 3 February 1838, *GDR* (1: 5394: 32–63).

[5] Extract BOR *Proceedings*, paras 19–31, 2 August, 1838, *GDR* (5369: 123–45).

[6] ibid. para. 32.

administration, however, were anything but clear. For, after agreeing that the expenses of management and family subsistence should be fixed and 'placed under *strict control*' and after stipulating that a prospective estimate of receipts and disbursements was to be required at the commencement of each season, 'which should on no account be exceeded', the Board added:

> It will be the duty of the Collector to see that this is sufficiently liberal but at the same time not unnecessarily profuse and that the Servants to whom the Zemindars entrust the administration of their Estates are competent and trustworthy. The details of the Zemindar's management should not be interfered with; but the Collector by a personal visit to and inspection of the Estate during the course of the year should satisfy himself of the mode of administration pursued and should see that the collections realised are accounted for.[1]

The Collector was instructed to take care not to press the Zamindars too closely. After all, considering their former opulence and prosperity and the present condition of their country, which exhibited 'a destruction of life unprecedented in any District in this Presidency', these 'Ancient Zamindars' were not to lose all hope of obtaining help from the Government.[2] The Board concluded their proceedings by urgently requesting that the arrears should be written off and that a progressively increasing *peshkash* (demand) should be fixed until the zamindaris were restored to normal.[3]

The Governor-in-Council approved of the Board's sentiments and felt that the Zamindars were not so incompetent or evasive as the Collector had reported.[4]

Meanwhile, another year passed with much the same results. Although the Collector spent a good deal of time in each of the zamindaris and was able to report on his observations in great detail—he was prying into every corner and probing deeply into the history of the district—, the Zamindars continued in refusing to show their accounts. Total collections for the year were less than half of the *peshkash* (Rs. 6,08,358 *v.* Rs. 12,25,458).[5]

[1] BOR *Proceedings*, para. 33.
[2] ibid. para 34. *Note:* Guntur Zamindars were not officially so classified.
[3] ibid. para. 35.
[4] Extract *Minute of Consultation*, para. 8, 11 September 1838, *GDR* (5369: 174–83).
[5] Goldingham [*Jamabandi Report* for Fasli 1247] to BOR, paras. 11–27, 6 September, 1838; *GDR* (54: 182–206). Extract BOR *Proceedings*, paras. 12–24, 14

The next year (1838–9) was the first in which Goldingham tried to carry out the recommendations of the Board. He had also been ordered by Charles Cotton, the second member of the Board who had been deputed by the Government on the orders of the Court of Directors to conduct a sweeping enquiry into the economic and financial decay of the Presidency, to make a thorough investigation of the social and economic affairs of Guntur.[1] Thus, doubly armed, the Collector renewed his efforts and, after the most penetrating examination which he had so far undertaken, he produced two remarkable reports.

Goldingham's report to C. R. Cotton is not of concern here since it did not come under scrutiny for another sixteen months; however, his *Jamabandi Report* for 1839 was also a prodigious achievement, particularly considering the opposition which he met both from his Huzur officers and from the Zamindars. In spite of protests, an attempt was made to confine subsistence, management (*sibandi* and *sadaravarudu*), and ceremonial allowances within reasonable limits. At least some idea of *kamatanu* land, that richest and most productive land reserved for the private cultivation of the Zamindar, was obtained. The Repalli Zamindar alone admitted that he personally saw to the cultivation of over 9,000 acres of *kamatamu* land along the river. Many other extra sources of income for the Zamindars were uncovered; but it was impossible to arrive at any exact estimate as to the total real income of the Zamindars. Goldingham was able to give detailed descriptions of the zamindaris, enumerating and classifying the villages, the soils, the sources of water, and the people; but he was not successful in obtaining zamindari accounts. By pointing at various irregularities and excesses of expenditure—the Chilkalurpadu family admitted spending Rs. 22,977 for subsistence and the Sattanapalli Zamindar incurred and paid heavily on private debts —Goldingham was able to show that the Zamindars had no intention of keeping faith with the Government for their stewardship.[2]

In summing up his general views on the present condition and

March, 1839, *GDR* (5370: 51–68). Extract *Minute of Consultation*, paras. 3–6, 23 May, 1939, *GDR* (5370: 142–5).

[1] Extract BOR *Proceedings*, 30 July 1838, *GDR* (5369: 121–2). Minute of Consultation, 20 July 1838. COD *Despatch*, No. of 30 August 1837.

[2] Goldingham [*Jamabandi Report* for Fasli 1248] to BOR, paras. 12–55, 29 October 1839, *GDR* (60: 5397: 110–74).

future prospects of the zamindaris, Goldingham observed that while co-operation in the details of management had not yet been received, he had been able to draw his own conclusions. There was an obvious tendency to depart from the *makta* (fixed money field assessment) system for the *ijara* (renting) system and the *kailu* (sharing 'heaps') system. This enabled the Zamindar to take full advantage of high prices and bountiful harvest to the detriment both of the cultivators and the Government: 'The working and ultimate tendency of the Zemindary Principles have been fully developed by the History of the last 38 years of Revenue administration in the District. It remains to be seen what the ultimate effects of the administration of the Zemindars as Managers under a peculiar crisis of their financial obligations is to be.'[1] Annual collections from any one zamindari had yet to reach 70 per cent. of the Permanent Settlement. The Zamindars had not only failed to stay within their fixed allowances, but they had resorted to all the various kinds of extra exactions (*nazrs*, *darbari kharch*, gifts to gods, &c.) which were traditional. Finally, a comparison with previous expenses of *amani* management or the current expenses of *amani* for the Malraju Estate showed how costly the *amildari* experiment had become.[2]

When the Board of Revenue dealt with this report eleven months later, on 10 September 1840, they were anything but pleased. After remarking on the lack of specific accounting and on the departure from the scale of expenses which the Collector had set, they observed: 'The Board are still of the opinion, however, that with firmness and energy on the part of the Collector, the views which they have so frequently mentioned and repeated might easily be carried out in practice.'[3] Accounts from villages ought to have been easily obtained showing results for the year which could be compared with the outturn of former years, 'which must be forthcoming in [the Collector's] Cutcherry'.[4] For any obviously great deficit, an officer should have been deputed personally for an investigation.

Abstract Village Accounts at the beginning and at the close of each year should be peremptorily insisted upon and full explanation required

[1] *Jamabandi Report* for Fasli 1248, para. 70, op. cit. [2] ibid. parsa. 68–73.
[3] Extract BOR *Proceedings*, para. 19, 10 September 1840, *GDR* (5371: 168–91).
[4] Extract of BOR *Proceedings*, para. 19, 10 September 1840, *GDR* (5371: 168–91).

upon any discrepancy between the real and the supposed accounts. If to this be added conciliatory bearing toward the Zemindars themselves and a desire to assist them . . . in the difficulties of their position . . ., it is not doubted but that a sufficient control might be established upon the Zamindars' management for all practical purposes.[1]

Noting that arrears of revenue had now reached the enormous sum of 43 lakhs, the Board called for some extraordinary remedy. In their anomalous position, holding and managing their lands at the simple pleasure of the Government, liable to be ejected at any moment, deeply in debt, and hopeless of retrieving their affairs, the Board felt that the Zamindars should be prevented from diverting a large portion of the revenues to their private purposes.[2] If the zamindari system was to be continued, either the *peshkash* (revenue demand) should be lowered and the Zamindars allowed only a fixed percentage of *amani* revenues, or the zamindaris declared inalienable, by sale for private debts, and fully restored to their families. Some step was urgently called for, the Board declared.[3]

Yet no substantial change in policy occurred. The deterioration of control in the zamindaris continued throughout the remainder of Goldingham's administration. The following table shows the percentages of the permanent *peshkash* which were realized during the five years from 1838 through 1842.

Table Showing Rough Percentages of Peshkash Realized: Faslis 1248–1252[4]

Zamindaris	F. 1248	F. 1249	F. 1250	F. 1251	F. 1252
	%	%	%	%	%
Repalli	66	75	73	64	68
Sattanpalli	48	45	73	68	60
Chilkalurpad	55	62	62	58	41
Vasireddy	55	67	80	52	49
Malraju (*Amani*)	51	66	68	64	61

In spite of the Collector's efforts, behind which there was the constant prodding of the Board and the Government, statements that

[1] BOR *Proceedings*, paras. 20–21. [2] ibid. para. 43 [3] ibid. paras. 44–47.

[4] Figures obtained from several *Jamabandi Reports* and from *Proceedings* on the same. See Extract BOR *Proceedings*, para. 7, 26 August 1844, *GDR* (5375: 297–337). Extract BOR *Proceedings*, para. 8, 11 July 1842, *GDR* (5373: 275–91). Detailed tables giving total figures for each years since the famine are to be found in each report and each proceeding.

'none of the four managing Proprietors rendered up their accounts of the administration of the year'[1] or words to that effect followed in dreary succession.

The failure of the Government in providing adequate supervision over their experimental *amildari-zamindars* is not simply explained. It seems clear that the Government and the Zamindars were fundamentally at cross-purposes and that understanding was lacking on both sides. It was not enough simply to order the Collector to procure the accounts as if from ordinary district officers. The Collector had no strong sanctions to apply; nor had he any hand in the selection and certainly no power to remove recalcitrant zamindars. The Zamindars continued to retain more than ordinary *amildari* powers over their territories. Their uncertainty about the future in the light of their enormous public and private debts seems to have made them reckless. Instead of co-operating with the Collector to recover the financial independence of their territories, 'they [turned] the remaining period of their temporary authority as much as possible to their own advantage'.[2]

What neither the Collector, the Board, nor the Government had the means of knowing at the time were the great lengths to which the Zamindars had gone to enrich themselves. The details of their malversation did not come to the surface until 1845 when Walter Elliot, the Board Member who was deputed as a special commissioner to Guntur, conducted a village by village investigation into the minutia of district affairs. These details are so profuse that only a few will be given to illustrate the general nature of zamindari operations.

Money exactions, called *nazrs* or *nazranas*, were taken from the villages on every sort of pretext. These may generally be divided into those which were of a personal, family, or religious nature and those which were of an agricultural nature.

Extraordinary levies for personal, family, or religious and ceremonial purposes were very indefinite, varying according to the size and strength of each village, the kind of occasion, the temper of the people, the economic conditions of the season, and

[1] Extract BOR *Proceedings*, para. 2, 26 August 1841, *GDR* (5372: 383–415).
[2] Extract of BOR *Proceedings*, para. 7, 26 August 1841, *GDR* (5372: 383–415), on the *Jamabandi Report for Fasli* 1249, 21 November 1840, *GDR* (5397: 277 ff.).

the urgency of the Zamindar's need. Anywhere from Rs. 10 to Rs. 800 and even up to Rs. 1,600 were taken per village for each occasion. The marriage of a daughter of a Zamindar or of his diwan, the end of a Zamindar's minority, the birth of a child (of a son in particular), the inauguration of a child's education, the investiture of sacred thread, the rebuilding of a palace (e.g. Sattanapalli) or repair of a fort-gate (e.g. Repalli), the purchase of elephants and horses, the manufacture of gold and silver plate, and countless other large and small demands for *katnamu* (presents) and *nazrana* (offerings) were made. Whether the occasion for exaction were invented to meet a particular need or whether the exaction so procured were disbursed for its supposed object, a zamindar invariably found some reason to ask for more.[1]

Exactions at various stages of agricultural production and upon various kinds of land and produce were much more regular. Usually about Rs. 2 for cutting and Rs. 2 for thrashing (called *katkata*) with an additional *nazr* of Rs. 4, making a total of Rs. 8, would be levied from each village in the zamindari. A fee called *putti kharch* was charged for measuring, usually at a rate of Rs. 1 for each *putti* (or *kandi*: 20 *tums*). Pressure on current payments or on old arrears in any of a wide variety of categories of land or production could be relaxed simply by making an extra contribution. A favourable contract (*kaul* or *darkhast*) for land rent would not be granted until induced by a special gift nor be honoured without another gift. *Nazrs* were accepted from villages in order that the fixed money assessment (*makta*) and renting systems (*ijara*) might be abandoned for the older and less reliable (*kailu*) sharing system. (The more imprecise, difficult to record, or indefinite a system was, the more a village stood to gain.) The wealthiest villages in all five of the zamindaris were made to pay for no specified reason. Revenue collections were often taken and then never credited to the villages in the accounts of the Zamindars, being marked under such innocent headings as gifts and expenses. The whole of the richest wet lands in many of the large and wealthy villages were simply appropriated on one pretext or another; moreover, income from assessed government (*seri* or

[1] *Elliot* [Commission of Enquiry] *Report* to BOR, paras. 30–32, 17 April 1846, *MRP* (IOL: 280: 20 and 21: 7485–95), No. 39 of 6 December 1847. Appendix A and B contain a large number of detailed examples taken from among the 882 villages of Guntur proper.

circar) lands was not recorded. Usually these lands were claimed as old private or personal lands (*savarams* or *kamatams*) of the Zamindar's family or of his servants. A zamindari diwan, a favourite dancing girl, a family priest, mendicant, teacher or temple, a pressing creditor, a demanding relative: the number of grasping hands could not be counted. In addition, the Zamindars hid original accounts and leases and then rented villages out under fictitious names or under the cover of the names of their relatives and servants; moreover, these leases were skilfully antedated and then filled with sleeping clauses which would benefit the Zamindar at some future period. The artifices employed were exceedingly varied and subtle.[1]

A possible reason for the disparity between theory and the operation of what defenders of the zamindari system called 'the universal law of self-interest' resulted from the habits and outlook of the Zamindars. Brought up in a period of profuse expenditure, nurtured on lavish extravagance, schooled to consider themselves rajahs by divine pleasure, the Zamindars were obliged to continue the ostentation necessary for supporting their personal assumptions or suffer social embarrassment and a painful loss of face and power. That prolonged recklessness, mismanagement, and short-sighted extortion might have added to the crushing force of natural calamities and that sustaining the outward appearance of more prosperous days, by borrowing or by evading and extorting, might ultimately bring a day of reckoning obviously did not deter the Zamindars. While private creditors began to descend upon them like vultures and while the Government began to growl more loudly as its patience ran out, the Zamindars lived in a world of unreality. If self-interest was their guiding principle, their policies were decidedly those of myopic self-interest.[2]

Of course the Zamindars were not always successful in obtaining what they wanted from the villages. It was necessary for them to reach down for increasing amounts of money without raising

[1]Walter Elliot's *Report*, paras. 32–34 with Appendices A and B, 17 April 1846 op. cit. Some of the villages were as follows: Nanakimavu, Gundlapalli, Chennapalli, Warukuchlapad, Nadenalenupudi, Unawa, Managadapurana, Uplapad, Vellatur, Pachelu, Tadipuru, Patibunda, Bapatla, Collepara, Uppatur, Komonur, Donapudi, Pedda Kondur, Kotapalli, Jalalapur, Tadikonda, Kumapadu, Madenala, Jalari, Mulpur, Nandigam, Golapadu, Irlapad, Kaniparu, Ippurapalem, Waragami, Patera, Penamudi, Kurupadu, Buddam, Nizampatam, Pedda Ganjam, &c.

[2] *Elliot Report*, para. 35, 17 April 1864, op. cit.

the alarm and calling down upon their heads the wrath of the Government, a task calling for the delicacy of a tight-rope artist. The village leaders had to be brought into consideration; for unless the independent and the sturdy were reconciled, a voice of protest would be heard. Hence, Karnams, Munsifs and other influential villagers shared the benefits of extortion with the Zamindars to the detriment of the poorer people and to the loss of the State. Walter Elliot wrote that 'it [was] not assuming too much to reckon that illicit gains must at the lowest computation have easily [exceeded] one-third of [the Zamindars'] actual receipts'.[1]

Meanwhile, deep heart-searchings had been going on for some time over the economic and financial plight of the Presidency. On 30 August 1837, the Court of Directors had ordered a thorough enquiry into the causes of decay in the country.[2] On 30 July 1838 Charles Cotton, Acting Second Member of the Board of Revenue, had been deputed to undertake the investigation and all Collectors were ordered to co-operate.[3]

Cotton had wished to make an extensive personal tour to obtain first-hand information from the districts. Lord Elphinstone, on the other hand, had felt that such a tour should only be undertaken for problem districts and that the benefits of the records and the trained staff in the Board's Cutcherry at Madras would make it advisable to direct the investigation from the Presidency. It had been the Governor's opinion that a properly conducted general tour of inspection would have been an endless task, quite beyond the intentions of the Court of Directors.[4]

After more than a year of gathering information, Goldingham dispatched his report on the condition of Guntur. He showed that the Zamindari Settlement had been a failure. The settlement had achieved little more than the realization of some sort of revenue for thirty years, and this, only by cancelling huge private debts and by constantly nursing the zamindaris back to health. Good seasons and high prices had merely delayed the inevitable day of

[1] *Elliot Report*, para. 31.
[2] COD *Despatch* to GOM, para. 56, No. 13 of 30 August 1837, *Madras Despatches* (89: 443–519).
[3] BOR *Proceedings*, 30 July 1838, *GDR* (5369: 121–2), with COD *Despatch* and GOM *Minute of Consultation* (20 July, 1838) included.
[4] Elphinstone to Henry Chamier (Chief Secretary), 6 January 1839, *Elphinstone Collection* (IOL: Eur. MSS. F.87), Governor's Letters Sent, Vol. I, No. 85.

reckoning. Although market prices had never fallen to the level at which the very light demand (*peshkash*) had been computed, neither the prosperity of the country nor the happiness of its people had been achieved.[1]

Goldingham was certain that there was no way to control the Zamindars. Too much authority was delegated with too little justification or supervision. If the ryotwari system was destructive or inefficient, then it was the Government's fault and there were at least some tools for locating and correcting the trouble. If the machinery was weak or inefficient, direct remedies were available. If frequent transfer, natural inaptitude, or lack of support from Madras paralysed the exercise of power in the Huzur, reforms could be made: 'An efficient administration under the Ryotwary is always attainable under the Government; but an efficient administration of Zemindary is never attainable, because it depends on the Zemindars alone, whose moral qualities and principles of management are at variance with a prosperous state of the district.'[2] Zamindars were interested only in plans 'to rack-rent the tenant, to overreach the Government, and to play the fool at Weddings, funeral obsequies, and poojahs'.[3]

Before he could do more than make some preliminary observations on the *Goldingham Report*, Cotton's health failed and he was forced to leave India. John Sullivan, a member of the Council and a person who had known Munro and supported the Munro tradition, took charge of the enquiry.[4]

On 24 December 1840, Sullivan submitted his views on Goldingham's 'very intelligent report'. He fully agreed. Bad seasons, poor irrigation, irregular assessment, faulty management, frequent changes of Collectors, and harmful judicial procedures had certainly contributed to the condition of the district, but zamindari maladministration was the cardinal defect. The decay of Guntur District, which was more pronounced than that of any other district, had been epitomized in the words of local Ryots who had said that 'The British Government [esteemed] the prosperity of the Ryots to be their treasure while the Zamindars [considered]

[1] *Goldingham Report*, paras. 37–40, 13 December 1839, *MRP* (280: 7: 2537), No. 30 of 16 April 1841.

[2] ibid. para. 90. [3] ibid. para. 91.

[4] Minute by Lord Elphinstone, 28 October 1840, *Elphinstone Collection* (IOL: Eur. MSS. F.87), Governor's Minutes, III (Revenue Department, 1837–42), pp. 212–14.

the funds in their bags to be the same'.[1] Had the Madras Regulations been strictly applied, the estates would have been sold long ago. One had but to compare the results of *amani rule* in Palnad with *zamindari rule* in Guntur proper to be convinced of the superiority of ryotwari principles. To Sullivan, the irretrievable embarrassment of the Zamindars and the ruin of the Ryots were 'entirely owing to maladministration'.[2] He supported Goldingham and Cotton in the view that the zamindaris should be abolished and a ryotwari settlement introduced.

The Board of Revenue favoured a plan by which the zamindaris would be purchased by the Government and then reconferred on the same Zamindars with new *sanads* (deeds) which would stipulate that the estates were not liable for private debts contracted under the old *sanads* and which fixed the payable revenue below that of the 'permanent' *peshkash*, gradually raising it as local resources improved until it reached the old level.[3] The Board took the view that the permanent assumption of the zamindaris by the Government would be generally unpopular in the district.[4]

On 16 April 1841, the Governor-in-Council entirely endorsed the opinions of Sullivan over those of the Board. A general economic improvement, together with an escape from uncertain seasons, could only be achieved by a broad development of irrigation, something which the Zamindars would neither be willing nor able to do. Realizing the reluctance of the Court of Directors to the total abolition of the Guntur Zamindars, the Madras Government, nevertheless, could see no other solution. Further delay would only confirm the growing notion and establish a precedent that zamindaris were never to be sold for arrears. While 'a respectable maintenance should be allowed to these ancient families', it was clear that the Government should also be secured from loss and the people from ruin.[5]

By this time events in Guntur had moved a step closer to final foreclosure. Manur Venkanna Rao, who had been co-proprietor of the estate with his murdered brother's widow since 1832, had

[1] John Sullivan to Chief Secretary of GOM, para. 18, 24 December 1840, *MRP* (280: 7: 2351–426), No. 30 of 16 April 1841.
[2] ibid. para. 20
[3] BOR *Proceedings*, paras. 44–45, 10 September 1840, *GDR* (5371: 168–91).
[4] ibid. The same is also in *MRP* (280: 7: 2323–50), No. 29 of 16 April 1840.
[5] *Minute of Consultation*, para. 33, also 25–32, 16 April 1841, *GDR* (5372: 213–29) or *MRP* (280: 8: 2782–93), No. 31 of 16 April 1841.

died in November, 1840; moreover, there being no heirs and the widows being entirely incompetent, the estate had been attached a few days later. The assumption of the Vasireddy and Sattanapalli villages, 'pending the receipt of final authority from the Home authorities',[1] was proposed by the Board of Revenue on 26 August, 1841; but the Government preferred to wait for the arrival of decisions from the Queen-in-Council and from the Court of Directors unless it should become 'absolutely necessary' to go ahead with the '*zafting*' (attaching).[2]

The necessity soon occurred. On 8 January 1842, having watched the behaviour of Vasireddy Ramanadha Babu with increasing anxiety for several months, Goldingham learned enough about the Zamindar's misbehaviour to enable him to take over 333 villages of this huge zamindari. Before the immense task of transferring control could be completed, however, Goldingham left the district.

The Court of Directors dispatched their decision on the Guntur Zamindars on 21 June 1842.[3] The Directors did not adopt the suggestion of the Revenue Board that uncontrolled administration by the Zamindars should be restored on more favourable terms. But they also opposed any harsh measure against the Zamindars or any action which might arouse strong local resentment. The Court would have preferred to have the Government nurse the zamindaris back to health and then, freed from public and private debts, to have restored the estates to their owners; however, the Board of Control insisted that the Collector could not possibly administer the zamindaris properly unless 'a full surrender to Government of Proprietary interests' were obtained.[4] The zamindaris were not to be restored until a thorough-going reform and reorganization of their administration was accomplished. Then, new *sanads* (title deeds) and *kabuliats* (agreements signed by the Zamindars) were to be put into effect 'restraining them from interfering with any of the arrangements and rates of assessment which they may find in force in their Zemindaries without the express consent of your Government'.[5] The biggest difficulty,

[1] BOR *Proceedings*, para. 8, 26 August 1841, *GDR* (5372: 383–415).
[2] *Minute of Consultation*, para. 6, 4 October 1841, *GDR* (5372: 416–26).
[3] COD *Despatch* to Madras, No. 14 of 21 June, 1842, *MD* (97: 783–811). Also *Board's Collections* (vol. 2272, Collection Nos. 116, 221), Draft 48 of 1849.
[4] ibid. para. 12.
[5] COD *Despatch* to Madras, para. 8, No. 14 of 21 June 1842, op. cit.

what to do about the private creditors, was left entirely to the discretion of the Madras authorities.

Under the prodding of the Board of Control, the Court of Directors also directed a severe rebuke to the Madras Government for its personnel policies. After noting Goldingham's opinion that the frequent change of Collectors in Guntur had had the effect of leaving the district to take care of itself and after marking Sullivan's statement that without a doubt Goldingham's opinion applied with equal truth to all the districts of Madras, the Court wrote:

> We have on more than one occasion expressed our disapprobation of these frequent changes which must often have the effect of causing the removal of the Collector just at the moment when he has acquired that degree of local experience absolutely requisite to enable him to obtain a proper insight into the wants and capabilities of his district and without which his services lose a great portion of their value. We are equally averse to the system now so prevalent of creating an unnecessary large number of acting appointments for the purpose of supplying a single temporary vacancy. . . . To supply one vacancy, no less than four acting appointments were made.[1]

The dispatch ended with a general attack on irregular proceedings and deviations from established practice. Before the dispatch could be sent, however, a provision specifically suited to Guntur was inserted by the Board of Control to the effect that the Collector of Guntur should be offered such extra allowances as 'might induce the officer entrusted with the re-settlement . . . to remain in the District until its completion'.[2]

Meanwhile deterioration continued. With only one estate remaining outside the direct control of the Government,[3] what appeared to be a general tendency to encroach upon old assessments, to withhold collections of revenue, to relinquish unfavourable lands, and to evade administrative control became more and more apparent.[4]

On 21 November 1842 the Court's *Despatch*, the Government *Minute of Consultation*, and the Board's *Proceedings* for the enforcement of new policy were forwarded to Guntur. Stokes was

[1] COD *Despatch* to Madras, para. 12. [2] ibid. para. 11.
[3] BOR *Proceedings*, para. 4, 9 July 1842, *GDR* (5373: 275–91), on the *Jamabandi Report* for Fasli 1250. BOR *Proceedings*, 11 July 1842, *GDR* (5373: 267–73).
[4] GOM *Minute of Consultation*, 8 August 1842, *GDR* (5373: 347–53).

ordered to enforce the surrender of the *sanads* of *milkiat-istemari* (possession in perpetuity) from the Zamindars,[1] to decide upon a maintenance allowance for each Zamindar, and to uncover the private indebtedness of each Zamindar. In view of 'the just rights of their creditors, public and private, it [was] imperative that the means for magnificence and luxury should not be provided' to the Zamindars, though they should have enough to support themselves respectably.[2] After the surrender was effected, a complete field survey and assessment was to be introduced. Papers illustrative of the most recent surveys in Bombay and Agra, copies of Munro's writings, and the Board's own views on the practical problems of introducing the system already prevailing in the Palnad were promised. The Board was anxious to prevent 'vexatious and inquisitorial systems of Revenue' and 'annoying interference of public servants' which were an increasingly chronic problem in *amani* administrations.[3] Until a proper survey and assessment could be concluded, rents were to be arranged annually with village leaders for the whole of each village and not with each village ryot (the old joint-rent system).[4]

The Malraju, whose villages had been under amani since 1832, was the first Zamindar to surrender his *sanad* (on 15 January 1843). The widows of Chilkalurpad submitted a few days later (on 25 January). Vasireddy Ramanadha Babu, Manur Venkata Gopal Rao, and Manika Janganna Rao, however, were more stubborn. Their intransigence was reported to Madras. Orders were returned that if negotiation failed their estates would be put up for auction.[5]

The Sattanapalli Zamindar yielded (on 3 April). On hearing of the intransigence of the Vasireddy Naidu and the Manika Rao (Repalli had been taken over by district officers on 17 April), the Government sanctioned the sale of their estates. Not until the sale

[1] BOR *Proceedings*, para. 2, 21 November 1842, *GDR* (5373: 436–71).

[2] *Note on terms of surrender:* an adequate living allowance, administrative reorganization, improvement of resources (irrigation) to be charged against future proceeds, a settlement of private debts with the estates no longer to be liable for such debts, and restoration of the estates on condition that new arrangements were not to be tampered with.

[3] op. cit. para. 4. *Note:* Not only did Stokes complain of the inquisitorial interference of district officers in village administration (as will be seen shortly), but such descriptions were commonly given in the Presidency. They were thought to be an inevitable danger of the ryotwari system. See the *Torture Commission Report* (Madras, 1855).

[4] ibid. paras. 3–5.

[5] BOR to Stokes, 13 March 1843, *GDR* (5373: 89–93).

advertisements had been published did Ramanada Babu and Janganna Rao give in, the latter agreeing to surrender only two days before the day of the sale (30 June). Even then, further urging was required before the actual documents, the *sanads* which had been bestowed more than forty years earlier, were obtained.[1]

[1] GOM *Minute of Consultation*, 16 May 1843, *GDR* (5374: 153–7), BOR Secretary to Stokes, 22 May 1843, *GDR* (5374: 219–22). BOR to Stokes, paras. 2–3, 6 July 1843, *GDR* (5374: 272–4).

XII

THE COLLUSION OF THE CIRCAR SERVANTS, 1842–1845

THE removal of John Goldingham to North Arcot in February 1842, could hardly have occurred at a more awkward time. Not only was the administrative policy for Guntur under review in Madras and London, but local influences were combining with disruptive, even dangerous portent. Nyapati Shashagiri Rao and his followers had regained control of the Huzur Secretariat, but not without arousing acute bitterness and alarm in the opposing faction. With collapse of the zamindari system, the whole district was a in a state of disorganization. The factional strife which had so beset the administration was spreading into the attached zamindaris where there was much scope for patronage and aggrandisement. Within the amani villages (the Malraju and Chilkalurpet divisions and the taluks of Palnad), silent forces in the villages were moving restively and straining to loosen the bonds of central control.

The next two months simply hastened the already well advanced state of deterioration. Arthur Hathaway, a junior officer with only two years' experience in India, could scarcely match the moves of the wily Sheristadar. He was succeeded after a month by Archibald Mathison, Shashagiri Rao's friend who had served in Guntur before and was unlikely to obstruct the Huzur elite.

The new Collector, Hudleston Stokes, arrived on 21 April 1842, and was soon joined by a new Head Assistant, Henry Newill. Stokes was the son of a vicar (of Doveridge, Derby) and the nephew of a company director (John Hudleston). He had joined the Service in 1825. After working briefly in Tinnevelly and Canara, his first decade had been in Kurnool. He had returned to Kurnool from his furlough in 1841. His next ten years, broken only by a year's sick leave to the Cape (1844–5), were to be spent in Guntur. Henry Newill, his Head Assistant and successor in

Guntur, had served his apprenticeship under Goldingham in 1841–42. Like Goldingham, both Stokes and Newill were staunch evangelicals and missionary supporters, practical and systematic, and eager to apply the latest scientific techniques to administration and agriculture.[1] (All three knew and spoke Telugu fluently.)

By the time Stokes arrived on the scene, however, Shashagiri Rao had gained so much ground that he was almost fully in charge of the affairs of the district. The triumphs which he had experienced in his struggles with the Sabnavis faction and in his resistance to Goldingham, the support which he had invariably received from the Board of Revenue, and the immense opportunities for patronage, which were opening up with the collapse of the zamindaris, drove the Huzur Sheristadar to even greater boldness.

Shortly before leaving the district, Goldingham had selected Sabnavis partisans to administer the more than 400 villages which had recently come under government control. The Sheristadar, not intending to allow such a huge block of patronage to slip from his grasp, immediately countered by sending a petition to the Board of Revenue against this action.

The Board of Revenue was informed that Goldingham had abused his position by continuing to show favouritism to Sabnavis Venkta Krishna Rao. Specifically he charged the former Collector of having given a sheaf of signed but blank Appointment Orders to the Naib Sheristadar, Manganuri Lakshminarsu, and to Krishna Rao. He accused these individuals of having used these blank slips in order to fill the *zafti*-establishments with their own followers and of having fomented trouble throughout the administration.[2]

At the same time, Shashagiri Rao applied his persuasive powers in bringing Mathison, the Acting Collector, around to his own views. On 11 April 1842, Mathison sent a much altered and reduced list of the establishment (*muain-zabita*) to Madras. The

[1] *Writer's Petitions*, No. 15 in vol. 39 and No. 3 in vol. 56. *Lists of Madras Civil Servants: Covenanted* (IOL: vol. 6). C. Prinsep, *Record of Services of Madras Civilians* (London, 1885), pp. 72, 97, 134, 192. Henry Newill, recommended to Sir Richard Jenkins by the Earl of Powis, was born in Welsh Pool (Montgomery County) and seems to have been connected to the Clive family.

[2] *Elliot Report*, para. 55, 17 April 1846, *MRP* (281: 20: 7538–40), No. 39 of 6 December 1847.

personnel selected by Goldingham for the Vasireddy, Chilkalurpad and Malraju taluks and samutus were removed because they were considered new and untried. Manganuri Lakshminarsu was removed from the Huzur and from his charge over the Vasireddy estate. His brothers, Lakshminarain and Chenchuramiah, were removed from Aminships in Chilkalurpad and Tenali. Krishna Rao was dismissed from his post as Amin of Rachur. Mathison also dismissed two other prominent members of the Sabnavis faction, the Amins, Namburi Krishniah and Bundaur Rajaswaram. On the other side, Nyapati partisans were selected to fill the key positions which had just been made vacant. Nakkalapalli Subha Rao, who had been the Amin of Bapatla Thana, was brought back into the Huzur Cutcherry as Naib Sheristadar and put in charge of the Vasireddi Zamindari. Tota Krishnamah, who had been the Diwan of Ramanadha Babu, became the Amin of Chebrole Thana. Finally, Shashagiri Rao's son-in-law, Purushothum Rao, became Head Gumashta in the Secretariat (Sheristakhana) of the Huzur, thus freeing the Sheristadar's hands for exerting his influence throughout the district.[1]

The bitterness caused by this wholesale substitution of personnel can be seen by the fact that a considerable number of petitions were submitted to the Board against the actions of the Acting Collector.[2]

In dealing with this maze of charges and counter-charges, the Board of Revenue asked for a fuller and more careful investigation. While Mathison's selections were sanctioned, Stokes was ordered to report on the various petitions. Thus, in addition to the normal problems of administration and the special problems involving the reorganization of the *zafti-zamindaris*, Stokes had to track down the evidence for charges against Shashagiri Rao, Krishna Rao, and Ramanadha Babu, to name just a few.[3]

Stokes' first report on this matter was not made until 18 August 1842. The only clear fact to emerge from this report was that a 'violent party spirit' prevailed throughout the district which was disrupting the whole administration. Stokes could find no evidence to support Shashagiri Rao's accusations against Goldingham. The former Collector's list of candidates to be selected for

[1] *Elliot Report*, para. 56, 17 April 1846, op. cit. Daniel White's *Report* to BOR, paras. 39–42, 61, 10 July 1845, *GDR* (No. 58: 5404: 79–139).

[2] BOR *Proceedings* of 2, 5, 9 May 1842, *GDR* (5373: 171–3, 177, 179). BOR to GOM Chief Secretary, 9 June 1842, *GDR* (5373: 255–7), and BOR *Proceedings*.

[3] Stokes to BOR 18 August 1842 (in *Elliot Report*, paras. 56–58), op. cit.

managing the Vasireddy Zamindari showed signs of being partially altered; however, many of the selections had been made by Lakshminarsu personally and therefore could not be attributed to Goldingham.[1]

On the basis of this report, the Board exonerated Goldingham of any knowledge or participation in irregularity and, for the first time, delivered a severe rebuke to Shashagiri Rao for making such serious charges against the former Collector on the basis of nothing more than a rumour. At the same time, recognizing the dangerous consequences which might follow if the 'violent animosity prevailing between the two factions' were allowed to continue, the Board reaffirmed their disapproval of Krishna Rao and strongly forbade the employment of either Krishna Rao or Lakshminarsu in the Guntur District in any capacity whatsoever.[2]

An understanding of the practical problems which were encountered in administering a district can hardly be obtained without some appreciation of the stubborn conservatism and tenacious striving for continuity which characterized the whole system of revenue management. The admissions which were made by many responsible authorities during the 1850's that the Madras Government was 'still collecting the revenue inherited from the most oppressive of native governments'[3] came close to the jugular vein of the matter.

The Madras administration was an Indian administration. No amount of theorizing and policy-making in London could gainsay the essential and hard truth that Indians gathered the revenue and that they gathered it in the time-honoured ways. Whatever system was adopted and however benevolent were its aims or logical its conclusions, it had still to run the gauntlets, first of the British bureaucracy, then of the Desastha bureaucracy, and finally of the village leadership.

Specific examples of this neutralizing process may be taken from the general working of the ryotwari (Munro) system. Foremost among these was the freedom of labour and cultivation which had been laid down by the Court of Directors as a cornerstone of the

[1] Stokes to BOR 11 August 1842 (in *Elliot Report*, paras. 56–58) op. cit.
[2] BOR *Proceedings*, 8 September 1842, ibid.
[3] J. W. Kaye, *The Administration of the East India Company* (London, 1853), p. 231. 'The Land Revenue of Madras', *Calcutta Review* (vol. 17, pp. 291–333), June 1852.

ryotwari settlement. All compulsion or restraint on freedom was supposed to cease under the new system. This was the declared policy and an essential ingredient of the ryotwari settlement as it was formulated. But this was not the applied policy at the local levels. The natural tendency of cultivators to abandon those lands which gave them a poor return because it was too heavily assessed was curbed for the sake of the revenue. The ryot did not have the freedom to pick out the fields which best suited him and to leave the remainder waste. James Dykes, the Collector of Salem, wrote that this practice gained greater strength during and after the disastrous Guntur Famine when 'there was no water to assuage the universal thirst'.[1] In 1835, he was told that 'the ryot has no right to pick fields'[2]; and in 1844, he was informed: 'If any ryot wishes to relinquish . . . he should be allowed to do so provided it is a whole field . . . and so situated that it can be conveniently cultivated by another or that he gives up bad and good portions together . . . [he should] on no account be permitted to throw up bad lands alone.'[3] Kaye wrote that whenever it was resolved that this outrageous practice should be suppressed, the revenue authorities admitted the evil of enforced tenancy but explained that reform would severely damage State finances.[4]

The essential feature of the ryotwari system was a multiplication of individual fields and a minute dividing up of responsibilities beyond the reach of European officers. Under the direct and skilful administration of hosts of Indian subordinates, cultivation was forced, improvements were punished with double and triple taxation, incentive was stifled, and torture was applied by local leaders to extract the last *dub* (copper).[5]

Increasingly, however, voices were being raised against the oppressive practices operating under the toleration of the Government. They argued that the ryotwari system was failing because it had never been properly tried. The evils of the Madras revenue system might be eliminated if Munro's ideas were realistically

[1] J. W. B. Dykes, *Salem, an Indian Collectorate* (London, 1853), p. 302.
[2] ibid. p. 307. [3] ibid. p. 320. Also see p. 317.
[4] Kaye, op. cit. pp. 228–9. J. Norton, *A Letter to Robert Lowe* . . . (Madras, 1854), p. 77, wrote: 'Every Revenue Officer knows that if rule were observed, the Government would scarcely receive half the revenue it now does.'
[5] Kaye, op. cit. pp. 226–32. *Report of the Commission for the Investigation of Alleged Cases of Torture in the Madras Presidency* (Madras, 1885), pp. 1–71 (see para. 60), with tabular summary on p. 72. Stokes gave evidence. Appendix C, No. 5 (pp. lxix–lxxv). Appendix D (pp. ccxi–ccviii).

applied. A scientific survey, a reduction and equalization of assessment, strong inducements on capital improvement, and a firmer control of the army of Indian officials who preyed 'upon the very vitals of prosperity' were needed.[1] By reducing taxes and allowing free cultivation, vast quantities of land which were waste would again come under the plough. There was no reason to assume, went the argument, that the revenue would necessarily decrease; indeed, it would probably increase. Most important of all, it was felt that good faith, optimism, and a spirit of liberty would transform the administration from the dark and fearful thing that it was.[2]

Stokes was a proponent of these reforming ideas. Accordingly, on 25 October 1842 he proposed certain practical changes which he felt would improve revenue management. Four innovations, departures from established procedure, were advocated. First, full freedom of cultivation, without any restriction or coercion, should be allowed. Second, the *anchana* (the custom of estimating the value of standing crops) should be abolished where there was a fixed field assessment (*makta*) since it was both unnecessary and conducive of oppression. Third, the requiring of a *dumbala* (a certificate of permission) before grain could be cut, thrashed, or stored was inconsistent with a *makta*-ryotwari system and should be abolished. And fourth, fixed money (*kists*) instalments of revenue should not be required until after time had been given for the marketing of produce. These preliminary reforms, the Collector thought, would clear away unnecessary suspicion and remove some of the scope for oppression, interference, and intrigue by local officers.[3]

Stokes was frank in showing that Shashagiri Rao opposed his ideas. He expressed his fear that he would not be able to accomplish much 'without the assistance of a servant trained in a better school than the Northern Circars and capable of more enlarged objects than the success of his private intrigues'.[4] He wrote: 'The present Head of this Office is clever and possessed of much experience of a certain kind; but he is utterly incapable of appreciating sound revenue measures and is so wedded to the crooked and oppressive practices now in force that nothing but opposition is to be looked for at his hands in any departure from them.'[5] It seems clear from

[1] J. Norton, op. cit. p. 178. [2] ibid. pp. 319–22. [3] *Elliot Report*, para. 57, op. cit.
[4] Extract from Stokes's letter of 25 October 1842, *Elliot Report* para. 57, ibid.
[5] ibid.

this statement that Stokes had come to the same conclusion regarding the root of his troubles in Guntur as had his predecessor, Goldingham.

In reply, the Board of Revenue concurred with the general principles of revenue administration laid down by Stokes; but they urged caution in practical application. 'Where a wrong and impolitic system [was] confirmed by long usage, it [was] necessary to use circumspection in introducing even wholesome innovations.'[1] Only such modifications as local circumstances warranted should be introduced. Complete liberty of cultivation would be too instantaneous an abandonment of restrictions. The Bellary District rules of 1824, which were sent for the Collector's guidance, required that land could only be relinquished if good and bad land were given up in equal proportions.[2] The proposals for abolishing *anchanas* and *dumbalas* on lands having a fixed money rent were sanctioned; but caution was urged in allowing crops to be removed from the threshing floors without restriction 'lest the realization of the revenue should be endangered by improvidence on the part of some Ryots and chicanery on the part of the Knavish'.[3] On the whole, the Collector was advised to delay his reform measures until after he had gained a longer experience in the district. Finally, the Board noted that Shashagiri Rao's objections to reform had been tendered to the Collector in 'that confidence which is so highly desirable' and remarked that while there was 'some matter of a contrary character' in the Sheristadar, there was also 'a good deal that [was] practical and judicious'.[4]

The Collector submitted a second proposal for administrative reform on 25 May 1843. Since the zamindari *sanads* were being given up and a complete reorganization of administration over the zamindari villages had received the sanction of the Home authorities with a view to increasing the prosperity of the district, Stokes recommended that a new territorial division of Guntur proper and a thorough revision of *huzur* and *ghaibatu* establishments should be done as quickly as possible in order to tighten up the lines of control.[5]

[1] Extract of BOR *Proceedings*, para. 1, 10 November 1842, *GDR* (5373: 451–7).
[2] *Note:* Even this permission for a limited freedom of cultivation appears to have been a considerable concession (see below).
[3] ibid. para. 4.
[4] BOR *Proceedings*, para. 5, 10 November 1842, *GDR* (5373: 451–7).
[5] Stokes to BOR Secretary, paras. 2–3, 25 May 1843, *GDR* (44: 5402: 41–51).

Specifically, Stokes wished to untangle the maze of conflicting jurisdictions and blurred responsibilities which existed. He went into detail to show how hopelessly confused the territorial divisions were, trying vainly to distinguish between parganas, simas, circars, vantus, samutus, mutthas, and so on, and trying vainly to sort out the villages belonging to the different zamindari families. In place of fourteen Revenue Amins, five of whom were without police authority, two Police Amins ('Heads of Police' exclusively), and two Salt Amins—some of whom had jurisdiction over the same villages—the Collector proposed twelve Tahsildars each of whom was to exercise both revenue and police authority within his respective division. The twelve new taluks were to be formed without reference to zamindari ('proprietary') divisions on a principle of compactness or of proximity to the *kasba* or field station of each Tahsildar.[1]

Stokes also wished to reorganize the *ghaibatu* and *huzur* personnel of the district so as to tighten up the lines of control and clarify responsibility. Three grades of Tahsildars, receiving Rs. 120, Rs. 100 and Rs. 80 per month, were to be employed according to the size and the work of their taluks. The eight larger taluks were to have Deputy Tahsildars or Peshkars. The higher grades of officers in the Huzur Cutcherry were to be put on the same footing as similar officers in unsettled districts ; furthermore, instead of the office of Assistant Sheristadar there was to be a Translator, this freeing the Head English Writer to perform his proper duties; and instead of two Native Record Keepers there was to be one Native Record Keeper and one English Record Keeper, 'there being no such officer at present'.[2]

Two objections to the redistribution of territory were foreseen by the Collector. First there was the problem of legal liability in the event of the zamindaris being restored to their families; and second, there was the difficulty of keeping accounts for each zamindari separate so that the cost of survey or of any improvements in irrigation which might be made could be easily recovered.[3] Stokes was sure, however, that the district could not be worse off than it already was and that separate statements of

[1] Stokes to Acting BOR Secretary, paras. 4–9, 25 May 1843, op. cit.
[2] ibid. paras. 10–12. 'Native' meant Vernacular and 'English', an Indian who handled English.
[3] ibid. paras. 13–14.

collections and expenses for each estate could be prepared out of individual village accounts sufficient to meet both objections.

These proposals were not sanctioned by the Board of Revenue. In view of the difficulty already experienced in recovering the *sanads* from the Zamindars, the Board were loathe to try something even more drastic. Until information on the private debts and on the probable future production of the zamindaris was available and until some theoretical and practical arrangements for the introduction of a field survey and assessment were worked out, no extreme measures would be taken.[1] Undoubtedly this decision gave further comfort to the Sheristadar.

By September 1843 the steady resistance which Stokes had been encountering from officers under the influence of Shashagiri Rao was more than he could tolerate. The employment of extra establishments for the *zafti-zamindaris* during the previous months had greatly added to the strength of the Nyapati party; and, in August, a still further addition to these establishments had been sanctioned.[2]

The Board turned down yet another attempt to modify the administration in mid-October. No general revision of the administration for the sake of efficiency would be considered, they declared, until they had been favoured with information on the private debts and probable productivity of the zamindaris which had been requested on previous occasions.[3]

On 10 November Stokes tried hard to have the prohibition against the employment of Sabnavis Krishna Rao dropped. He wrote: 'It is my deliberate conviction . . . that the virulent clamour against V. Krishna Rao . . . resulted solely from the vindictiveness of a faction whose share of patronage in the district and of the perquisites of office had been abridged through his influence.'[4] Krishna Rao and his followers had not been faultless, being as interested in patronage as their opponents; but Stokes did not feel that this should preclude his being employed in the Cutcherry.

In their reply, the Board refused to consider the Collector's request or to heed the petition which Krishna Rao had sent there-

[1] Acting BOR Secretary to Stokes, 22 June 1843, *GDR* (5374: 161–7).
[2] Acting BOR Secretary to Stokes, 3 August 1843, *GDR* (5374: 285–6).
[3] Acting BOR Secretary to Stokes, 16 October 1843, *GDR* (5374: 365–6).
[4] Stokes to Acting BOR Secretary, 10 November 1843, *Elliot Report*, para. 57, op. cit.

with. Indeed, Krishna Rao's very presence in the district was looked upon as highly objectionable.[1]

The submission of a long awaited report on 4 December 1843, concerning the malversation of Vasireddy Ramanadha Babu, deeply implicated the Amin of Chebrole, Tota Krishnamah. This Telaga, who had more than a quarter of a century of experience in the district administration, had been seconded to the Vasireddy Zamindari as its diwan in 1836. During the following years, Tota Krishnamah and his son, Tota Chinna Krishnamah, had co-operated with the Zamindar, taluk officials, and huzur personnel under the direction of the Huzur Sheristadar in extorting huge sums of money from village people. Then, after being removed from power by Goldingham in January 1842, he had been appointed Amin of Chebrole in place of the Amin selected by Goldingham.[2]

The Board of Revenue recognized the fact that unauthorized exactions of this nature were altogether too common in the Northern Circars. While the obvious guilt of the Zamindar and his diwan was acknowledged, 'such acts [were not to] be viewed in the same light as if committed by an ordinary public servant'.[3] The Board left it to Stokes to take action against Tota Krishnamah, 'to dismiss him or continue him in employment in the Vasyreddy Zemindary or elsewhere as shall be most conductive to the public service'.[4] Since Henry Newill had been collecting evidence for eighteen months already, the Board saw little advantage in pursuing the investigation further.

Stokes's last attempt to shake off the paralysing hold of Shashagiri Rao was made on 1 February 1844. Manganuri Lakshminarsu was appointed as Huzur Sheristadar and Shashagiri Rao was demoted on the ground that he had been using his influence openly to obstruct the Collector's actions. Since there was no tangible evidence of misconduct, the Board was anything but satisfied. On 10 February Stokes was reminded that the removal of Shashagiri Rao had not been authorized and ordered his immediate reinstatement.[5]

[1] Acting BOR Secretary to Stokes, 30 November 1843, *GDR* (5374: 455–7).
[2] Stokes to Acting BOR Secretary, paras. 1–7, with enclosures, 4 December 1843, *GDR* (5402: 76–91).
[3] BOR *Proceedings*, para. 6, 15 February 1844, *GDR* (5373: 45–63).
[4] ibid. para. 8.
[5] Acting BOR Secretary to Stokes, 10 February 1844, *GDR* (5375: 41–43).

By this time it had become manifestly clear that no work could be satisfactorily accomplished while such heart-burnings and jealousies continued. For over seven years the district had been torn by continual factional strife fostered by the Board's stubborn defence of Shashagiri Rao. Each side had tried to strengthen itself to the utmost and had sought to weaken its opponents: 'Both [sides] were possessed of considerable local influence independent of the service, the one descended from the most trusted dependents of the Vasireddy family, the other connected by marriage with the Manoorwars of Satanapilly [and Chilkalurapad]. Each had numerous dependents and partisans and these they increased by every means in their power.'[1]

Nevertheless, a decisive break in favour of the Old Guard of Desasthas under the leadership of Nyapati Shashagiri Rao had occurred in 1842 when Mathison had replaced the various *zafti*-establishments appointed by Goldingham with Nyapati supporters. The preponderance of patronage and influence which had swung to the Sheristadar at that time had all but paralysed the Sabnavis faction and, eventually, the Collector as well. This preponderance had been further increased and confirmed when more Nyapati followers took over the remaining zamindari divisions during 1843. So numerous had Shashagiri Rao's followers become that, by 1845, Walter Elliot obtained a list which showed that 'seventy-four servants of all grades were [Shashagiri Rao's] own relations or connected with him by family ties, independent of a still larger number attached to him by friendship or the bonds of gratitude and common interests'.[2]

The crowning exhibition of local power in Guntur was a carefully laid plan which was at once a scheme of aggrandizement and a conspiracy to bring discredit upon the Collector, thus effecting his ultimate removal from the district. The essence of this plan was to keep back, delay, and finally divert the revenues of the district from the State to the Desastha-run organization of district officers.

Acting under orders from the Huzur Sheristadar, the Amins with their field organizations neglected to enforce the collection of revenues from the villages and then reported that the villagers

[1] *Elliot Report*, para. 58, 17 April 1846, *MRP* (280: 20: 7545–7), No. 39 of 6 December 1847. [2] ibid.

were unable to pay because of the poor season and bad market. In return for this service to the villages, district officers received a percentage of what they should have collected as revenue, the rest of the uncollected revenue going to the Ryots, or village leaders. At the same time, by taking advantage of Stokes's provision[1] for a limited freedom of cultivation, large quantities of land were declared to be thrown up by the village leaders; and then new offers for the same lands were made on greatly reduced terms accompanied by another round of donations to the district officers. Then, fixed field and money assessments (*makta*) were abandoned for the old system of collecting an estimated share of the grain harvested. Officers sent by the Collector to verify these circumstances and to inspect the conditions of land cultivation were invariably connected to the Huzur Sheristadar and to the Cutcherry elite; consequently, the truth of reports from the *ghaibatu* stations was always confirmed and the revenue proposals were accepted. No sooner were leases on the proposals (*darkhasts*) secured than the relinquished lands were immediately reoccupied and made to yield clear profits to the villagers.[2]

How this systematized corrupting of central authority escaped the detection and control of the Collector is not difficult to understand. Without the co-operation of his district establishment, there was little that the Collector could do to enforce his will over a thousand villages. In trying to curb the Sheristadar, it was almost impossible for the Collector to find an infraction definite enough to convince the Board of Revenue; furthermore, 'the whole of his servants were in league against him . . . and made common cause with the people, both parties participating in the advantage gained at the expense of the revenue'.[3]

Unfortunately for the administration, but fortunately for Shashagiri Rao, Stokes's health failed at the very time when it was most essential for him to cope with the designs of the district officers. The Sheristadar's conspiracy 'to get rid of Mr. Stokes

[1] It seems clear that the concession which the Board had made had been loosely interpreted in the *hukum* (order) issued by Stokes and that the district officers and villagers chose to interpret the *hukum* even more loosely (see above, preceding section).

[2] *Elliot Report*, para. 37, 17 April 1846, *MRP* (280: 20: 7503–6), op. cit. How these events were seen in Madras may be seen in the BOR *Proceedings* on the *Jamabandi Report* for Fasli 1252, paras. 2–20, 26 August 1844, *GDR* (5375: 297–337).

[3] *Elliot Report*, para. 50, ibid.

with whom he could not get on'[1] proved to be unnecessary. When, in mid-August, the Collector's physical strength finally gave way so that he was forced to leave the district, Henry Newill, the Head Assistant, took charge until the arrival of the new Acting Collector a month later (September, 1844).

Walter Elliott Lockhart was completely without experience in the Northern Circars and totally ignorant of the intricate affairs of Guntur. The Acting Collector was entirely deceived by the words of the Huzur Sheristadar. The troubles of the district were attributed to the unwise policies of his predecessor. Instead of following the Board's instructions that only annual rents were to be accepted until more accurate information on resources of the district could be obtained, Lockhart accepted Shashagiri Rao's recommendations that the villages should be given out on three year leases. The terms of these leases, concluded on low rates, were to be increased until, for the final year, they were almost up to pre-famine levels. In this way, Shashagiri Rao planned to fill up his own pockets, confirm the notion that Stokes was inefficient and that his innovations were destructive, strengthen his own reputation as a revenue officer by restoring the revenue to its old level, and then revert to the old, traditional ways of administering the district.[2]

To summarize the intricate sequence of events which led to this state of affairs, Stokes had the misfortune of coming to Guntur at a time when local forces were well advanced in their designs to combine silently and to enrich themselves at the expense of the State. Partly because he lacked facilities for obtaining information from the villages, partly because he failed to obtain the co-operation of his Indian (Desastha) subordinates, partly because he was unable to receive support from Madras, but probably because all of these factors worked together against him, Stokes could scarcely discover, much less control, what was going on beneath him. His words did not carry the weight of authority which was necessary. He was chief executive or *Huzur* in little more than name.

[1] *Elliot Report*, para. 26 and 59, ibid. Statements about the effort to have Stokes removed were most frequent at the village level.

[2] *Elliot Report*, para. 59, op. cit. White Report on the Conduct of Nyapati Shashagiri Rao, paras. 33, 36, 38–40, 10 July 1845, *GDR* (5404: 79–139). Revenue Collections in Guntur had now fallen to a record low of Rs. 5, 54, 298 against the Permanent Settlement's demand (*beriz*) of Rs. 12,25,458.

District officers, notably the Maratha Brahmans under Shashagiri Rao, supplanted the Zamindars. In the name of the Government, these officers inherited not only the decentralized administrations and delegations of authority—free from superior supervision and control—but also the perquisites and dignities which the Zamindars had enjoyed. The aura of divinity, the borrowed glow of the *huzur*, clung to them so that they could walk like giants on the earth. A Desastha's daughter being married or the erection of a special shrine by a Desastha was cause enough for special contributions from the villages. If the Karnams of Cherukuru could admit to giving the Sheristadar Rs. 100 a year, one can begin to imagine what he must have received from over a thousand other villages in the district.

At the same time, however, the villages probably gained the better part of many bargains with district officers. If a subordinate district officer accepted village money, he shed much of his own responsibility for corruption as soon as he brought his superior into the transaction. He passed the blame and shielded himself from any wrath which might fall. The higher the corrupting influence of the villages spread in the administrative hierarchy, the more shields there were between the village officers (and lower district officers) and the retribution which must inevitably fall. Level by level, higher officers became prisoners of those who were below them and risked exposure to still higher authority. The district hierarchy became caught in the webs and nets of village influence. Much as in the story of Gulliver, the strength of district administration was tied down by countless tiny threads and pegged to the earth, a captive of Lilliputian villages.

Since the Huzur Sheristadar was at the top of the hierarchy, his position was the most vulnerable. Blame stopped with him. When revenues dried up and questions were asked, he had to supply the answers. He could plead bad climate, disease epidemics, and poor market conditions for only so long. The gullibility, inefficiency, wrong judgement, or laziness of the State rulers could last only so long, Then, inevitably, the blow would fall and there would be a number of vacancies, particularly at the top levels of the administration.

But most of the Guntur district officers in high positions had gone through this process several times before. Their very vulnerability, combined with their uncertain tenure, encouraged

them to make the most of their moments of power. Loyalty to family and to caste demanded such behaviour. Village leaders and low level district officers, such as Samatdars, who were not very vulnerable but who were just as loyal to their families and castes and villages, were ever keeping up a steady pressure. In addition to this, it was usually possible for dismissed district officers to enter district administration again, if not in Guntur then in some other district.

XIII

OTHER PREOCCUPATIONS AT THE PRESIDENCY, 1842–1844

How the administration of Guntur was allowed to deteriorate to such a point that it was a menace to State authority must be seen in the light of the broader stream of events flowing in the Madras Presidency (if not in India as a whole). Unfortunately, a comprehensive history of this 'Cinderella of the East', as it was called,[1] has yet to be written. A yawning chasm must be filled before there is a proper understanding of South India during this period; however, for the purpose of this study, it will be sufficient simply to demonstrate briefly that the Madras Government was so preoccupied, particularly after 1842, with other matters than an emergency was required to bring about an awareness of the problems of Guntur. In this want of vigilance and efficiency, it seems apparent that the British rulers were to some degree prone to the same failings as their Muslim and Hindu predecessors.

After 1839 wars became a recurring theme for discussions and decision in all three Presidencies. The Kabul disaster, attempts to restore the prestige of British arms on the North-West Frontier, operations against the Amirs of Sind, a gathering of forces along the Sutlej, and the supporting of British trade in the Far East were parts of this theme. Since its position was mainly one of support and reserve, the weight of Madras military power faced north. Some regiments went to Secunderabad, Jubbulpore, Nagpur, and other northerly cantonments while others embarked at Madras for Sind, Singapore, and China. Madras troops were stationed so as to hold the lines of communication and take care of emergencies which might arise within Brtish dominions and dependencies.

The Madras Army was occupied from 1832 onward putting down revolts within the Presidency. The Parla-Kimedi and

[1] John Norton, *A Letter to Robert Lowe on the Conditions and Requirements of the Presidency of Madras* (Madras, 1854), p. 179.

Gumsur rebellions in Vizagapatam and Ganjam led to campaigns in jungles and hills and tied down two regiments in desultory and costly guerrilla fighting.[1] There was a rising of the Mappilas in Malabar,[2] an insurrection in Canara,[3] and difficulty in trying to eliminate human sacrifices (*meriah*) among the Khond tribes of Ganjam and Orissa.[4] When the Nawab of Kurnool gathered war material and was implicated in the 'Wahabi' conspiracy, a brief encounter ensued and the Jagir was annexed.[5] A rumour of conspiracy against the Company was also investigated in Mysore.[6]

Internal administration was also disturbed by subversions and scandals in the districts. George Casamajor was sent to Nellore in 1839 to resolve differences between the Collector, Stonehouse, and his Sheristadar.[7] John Dent was sent as a Special Commissioner to South Arcot in 1841 to stop the deterioration of authority in that district.[8] George Drury was deputed to Madura in 1842 where collusion between the Diwan of the Ramnad Zamindar and the Huzur Sheristadar resulted in scandalous corruption.[9] Sir Henry Montgomery was ordered to discover the causes of the deterioration of Rajahmundry District in 1846.[10] Still later there was a heated controversy over religious discrimination by Government officers in Tinnevelly.[11] These and other similar troubles in the *mufassal* caused enough concern in Madras to require remedial action.

A thorough knowledge of the Governorships of Elphinstone and of Tweeddale is not necessary in order to become convinced that a large amount of time and energy was expended in

[1] D. F. Carmichael, *A Manual of Vizagapatam District* (Madras, 1869), pp. 230 ff. T. J. Maltby, *A Manual of Ganjam District* (Madras, 1918), pp. 145–51.

[2] Innes and Evans, *Malabar District Gazetteer* (Madras, 1908), pp. 83–89.

[3] Letters on Canara Insurrection: *EC* (IOL: Eur. MSS. F. 87), Miscellaneous File I, Box 3–C, Nos. 8–13.

[4] Maltby, op. cit. pp. 154–9.

[5] N. G. Chetty, *A Manual of Kurnool District* (Madras, 1886), p. 41.

[6] Shashagherry Row to Commissioner, 15 October 1838, *EC* (op. cit.), Box 3–D, No. 39.

[7] Elphinstone to Casamajor and Stonehouse, 10 July 1839, *EC* (op. cit.), Box 3–A, Nos. 126, 127, and letters in Box 3–B.

[8] W. Francis, *Gazetteer of South Arcot District* (Madras, 1906), p. 214.

[9] Elliot to Elphinstone, 23 March 1843, op. cit. Box 10–D, No. 41.

[10] Henry Morris, *A Descriptive and Historical Account of the Godavery District in the Presidency of Madras* (Madras, 1878), pp. 291–6.

[11] *A Memorial from the Hindu Community of Madras to the Court of Directors* (IOL: Tract 633), printed in 1846.

intrigues, some serious and other trifling. Considering the fact that the European community in South India was small, particularly the official community, it is not surprising that a small-town atmosphere developed in which each hungered for the latest gossip and thought himself his brother's keeper. But, deeper than this, there was constant struggling for power. Within the trappings of bureaucracy, influence was gathered and dispensed in whispers on the verandah and in scratching pens under the *punkah*.

Without any pretence of establishing accuracy or of tracing policy, two mirrors may be set up to reflect the intrigues which played upon the Government. Walter Elliot was an acute and responsible observer who represented and, indeed, was virtually an embodiment of the ideas of the Elphinstone régime. This was an easy-going, warm-hearted, broad-minded, and far-seeing régime in which authority was readily delegated to trusted officers for long terms. It was a régime which gave serious and optimistic attention to liberal reforms and even tried to meet the desires of bothersome officers. In contrast to the flexible rule of Elphinstone, that of Tweeddale was rigid and almost brittle. Tweeddale put his emphasis on what he considered to be sound thinking. Because his notions were somewhat fixed, closed, and determined, Tweeddale found trouble in bending his theories to meet realities. Sent out to clean up the mess in Madras, he was suspicious and pessimistic. Unable to give trust, he would not delegate work and tried to do too much. Gradually he cut himself off from those whose support he needed and worked himself to a state of exhaustion.

The following are the views of Elliot and of Tweeddale as they reflected upon affairs in the Presidency and especially upon intrigues within the Government.

Walter Elliot was recommended to the service of the East India Company by his aunt, Lady Elphinstone (widow of the 12th Lord), and nominated by his grand-uncle, William Fullerton Elphinstone, in January 1819. He graduated from Haileybury with an honorary certificate of 'highly distinguished' and a reputation in sports. He landed in Madras on 14 June 1820. His record for two years at the College of Fort Saint George, where he learned Indian languages, history, law, and administration, was equally brilliant. He received an honorary award of 1,000 pagodas

for proficiency in Tamil and Hindustani.[1] Elliot was apparently one of those rare individuals who delight in languages for he later absorbed Telugu, Marathi, Persian, and even Arabic.

After two years as Assistant to the Collector and Magistrate of Salem, Elliot asked for an assignment in 'non-regulation' territory and, through the influence of 'powerful friends',[2] was appointed an Assistant to John Thackeray, the Political Agent of Dharwar (in Bombay). Here he was caught in the Kittur uprising a year later. Thackeray was killed and Elliot himself was imprisoned for six weeks. His experience with local inhabitants of the country at this time taught him lessons about Indian society which were later to be very useful. The gentle treatment which he received as a prisoner, the kindness and cordiality of several of his captors, the love of intrigue, the ferocious and merciless revenge aroused in persons who felt themselves humiliated, and the strength of caste discriminations and loyalties which he witnessed 'must have combined to influence his ideas . . . and to enable him to understand the Hindus as few other administrators have done'.[3] His desire to know more of their customs and feelings, their languages and their history provoked such a warm response from local leaders in Dharwar, that he was still remembered there seventy years later. Even though he was a Madras civilian in Maratha country, Sir John Malcolm would not let him go, making a special appointment in order to keep him. By the time he went on furlough in 1833, he had established a reputation as a hunter (*shikari*), archaeologist, historian, antiquarian, and linguist.[4]

Elliot's adventures next took him across the Egyptian desert, down the Nile, across another desert to Damascus and Jerusalem, through Turkey, and finally into many parts of Europe. After seventeen months at home, Elliot wrote to his cousin, Lord Elphinstone:

I see a report in the Courier that you are to have the Government of Madras. I trust it may prove to be the case and if so I shall be very happy if you can make any use of me. You know I have been out there for the

[1] *Writer's Petitions*, vol. 30, No. 19. Robert Sewell, *Sir Walter Elliot of Wolfelee: A Sketch of his Life and a few Extracts from his Note Books* (Edinburgh, 1896), pp. 1–5.
[2] ibid. p. 5. [3] op. cit. p. 12.
[4] ibid. 13–39. Col. Walter Campbell, *My Indian Journal* (Edinburgh, 1864), pp. vii, 69–86, 136, 256. By 1840, he was the leading orientalist in South India and a contributor to the Royal Asiatic Society, Asiatic Society of Bengal. He helped to found the Madras *Journal of Literature and Science*.

last 13 years and am pretty well acquainted with the state of affairs both public and private. What I should like would be to go with you as your private secretary. It is the only situation that (not being a military man) I could hold about you.[1]

Elliot and Elphinstone sailed on the *Prince Regent*, a yacht which Britain was presenting to the Imam of Muscat, and arrived at Madras in February 1837.

Between 1837 and 1843, Elliot was exceedingly active both in public and in private affairs. He was soon Third Member of the Board of Revenue, College Board Member, Canarese Translator, and Acting Persian Translator. On 24 November 1838 Elliot wrote from Suez describing hostilities between Wahabis and Egyptians.[2] Three weeks later he was married to Maria Hunter-Blair (of Blairquahan) who had come out from England to meet him in Malta. In 1839 he began excavating at Amaravati and in 1840 he investigated 'cromlechs and Cairns' of the Nilagiri Hills.[3] On 5 March 1841, after negotiating all morning with the Governor-General in Calcutta, Elliot wrote to the Governor: 'Lord Auckland did not commit himself to any precise declaration; but I think he will adopt the whole of your plan and abolish the whole of the transit duties, the town duty of Madras, the Malabar tobacco monopoly, and the salt monopoly, retaining only the duties on the frontiers.'[4]

Thus, it would appear that Elliot was probably the closest adviser, friend, and agent of the Governor. One doubts whether he spent much of his time in his office at the Board of Revenue; however, a special appointment, the Temporary Fourth Member who was supposed to help rid the Board of its heavy backlog of work, undoubtedly took up some of the slack while Elliot was away on other errands. Lord Tweeddale, the next Governor (from 24 September 1842), found Elliot acting as the Revenue and Judicial Secretary and 'Lord Elphinstone's guide in everything'.[5]

Elliot's first impression of the new Governor was that he was

[1] Walter Elliot to Lord Elphinstone, 1 April 1836, *EC* (Box 10–A). *Note:* This offer was accepted by Lord Elphinstone.

[2] Elliot to Elphinstone, 24 November 1838, op. cit. No. 11. *Note:* Elliot obtained leave to go to Malta to get married.

[3] Sewell, op. cit. p. 46.

[4] Elliot to Elphinstone, 5 March 1841 op. cit. No. 14 (Box 10–A).

[5] Tweeddale to Ellenborough, 26 November 1842, *TC* Home Private Letter Book, I, p. 179.

slow and not very clear-headed, a person of 'partial and incorrect views . . . maintained against reason and persuasion' who was 'tenacious both of his opinions and privileges'.[1] In Elliot's words, '[Tweeddale] is as afraid of responsibility as the other two Pillars [Lushington and J. Bird]. . . . If you had seen the burst of pious horror that re-echoes round the Council Table when I brought forward a two penny half penny bit of expenditure, you would have been amused.'[2] One thing seemed plain, Tweeddale smelled 'popery, treason, and gunpowder in everything connected with the late administration'.[3]

After the death of the Nawab of the Carnatic in 1825, Chepauk Palace and Durbar affairs were entrusted to the Naib (Diwan), a brother of the deceased, until the infant heir should come of age. When the young Nawab came of age in 1842, it became apparent that the Naib had squandered Durbar money. In recognizing the possibility that the Government might have to make good any loss to the Nawab, the Governor called for a full explanation from the Naib and entrusted the enquiry to Charles Lushington, the retiring Council Member. The Chief Secretary, Henry Chamier, was ordered to show why the Naib's extravagance and mismanagement had not been brought to light during his fifteen years in the Secretariat. Being a shrewd and cautious officer, Chamier brought out papers which revealed 'some shocking and undeniable proofs that Stephen Rumbold [Lushington] had entirely relinquished all control over the Durbar before being relieved by F. Adam'.[4] Thus: 'One great attempt of the present junta, that of glorifying the said Stephen, brother of a Councillor and of a Chairman [of the Court of Directors] is thereby blown up and ruined and he must share in the reputation of carelessness and stupidity charged against his successors.'[5] Chamier brought out another collection of papers showing that the Adam Government had been aware of the Naib's misbehaviour but, seeing no better person in the Nawab's family, had made the best of a bad situation. Affairs of the Circari Carnatic, meanwhile, were in complete confusion, no pay having been disbursed for months, the Chepauk household being filled with alarm and distrust, and the young Nawab himself going the way of most Nawabs of that day.

[1] Walter Elliot to Lord Elphinstone, 19 October 1842, *EC* (IOL: Eur. MSS. F. 87), Box 10–D, No. 41. [2] ibid. [3] ibid. 23 October 1842.
[4] Elliot to Elphinstone, 18 December 1842, op. cit. [5] ibid.

Lushington's parting contribution was to assist in opening a breach between the Governor ('Old Dum') and the new Council Member, Chamier. Lushington called upon Chamier to produce all the cancelled drafts and public papers which he had been secretly hording through the years for possible use as weapons. 'Some very offensive remarks . . . regarding Chamier' were recorded in a minute by the Governor.[1] Having thus tied a tin kettle on the tail of the Government ('animal'), Elliot saw Lushington depart 'chuckling at the disturbance he [had] left in Little Piddlington'.[2]

The new régime came into full sway. At the suburb of Guindy, away from the turmoil of the city, Tweeddale held court, surrounded by a 'Privy Council' of fawning friends and scheming advisers of whom the leader was William Underwood, Collector of Sea Customs. These individuals, having 'hooked Leviathan' and 'bamboozled' him, played upon their advantage with insolence.[3] Affairs at the port were just as depressing: 'Old Bird is such a poor devil, so good, so meek, so funky, and Chamier such an insincere, shifty, uncertain prig that there is neither credit nor advantage to be obtained under their auspices, controlled and guided by the leaden sceptre of King Dum. Chamier has a good place if he could keep it and remain quiet. But he cannot.'[4]

The new Chief Secretary, John Thomas, was 'an able and upright man',[5] but his appointment was a deliberate and unjust supercession of Robert Clerk, whose seniority and experience in the Secretariat made him the logical choice. Clerk resigned and went home (meeting Elphinstone in Cairo). Elliot, wishing to have no part with an office in which there was little hope of doing something constructive, gladly went back to the Board of Revenue, which he had 'never particularly desired to leave'.[6] There, according to Maria Elliot, he remained quiet and watchful.[7]

[1] Elliot to Elphinstone, 8 January 1843, op. cit.
[2] ibid. 8 January 1843.
[3] ibid. 8 February 1843, and 24 April 1844.
[4] ibid. 17 January 1843.
[5] ibid. *Note:* In order to avoid confusion due to the very complex game of musical chairs which have been going on in the Secretariat, it should be mentioned that Elliot was Acting Chief Secretary for Chamier as well as Acting Revenue and Judicial Secretary, that Clerk was the senior officer in the Secretariat, and that Thomas was not a favourite but a known evangelical.
[6] Maria Elliot to Elphinstone, 19 January 1843, op. cit. Two notes from Tweeddale, enclosed, informed Elliot that his services were not required and that he would not be confirmed as Chief Secretary.
[7] ibid. 21 April 1843.

From the Board of Revenue, things looked no better to Elliot. Doubts, suspicions, fears, plots, and narrow-minded views made the atmosphere oppressive. Drury was in Madura and Blackburn (the Collector) was suspended. Cameron was ousted from the Chepauk Agency. John Thomas worked without relief or assistance in the Secretariat, all his petitions being in vain, until he was worn down to a shadow. After nearly fretting himself into a fever, Montgomery was removed from his Acting Membership on the Board of Revenue, was appointed to Tanjore, and then, because protests against him from Home had come to Tweeddale, was sent to investigate Rajamundry District.[1] Elliot wrote:

> All this is bad and will do harm. There are a lot of intriguers about [Tweeddale]; it is evident. Who they are I don't exactly know; but from questions I am asked, I see that someone has furnished information.[2]
>
> . . . there has been a strong influence at work against you at home . . . Befere I left the office, I saw indications of the same spirit of attack evidently founded on false grounds, derived from unofficial cources. In fact, there is no doubt that Sir James Lushington has been acting with decided hostility toward you on account of his brother. Sim (who corresponds with the present Chairman) told me you would not have been relieved but for Sir James' persevering efforts. You never made any counter statements, so those of your enemies passed current. You would do well I think to look into this and see that no permanent damage has been done to your reputation.[3]

A scandal in the Accountant General's Office, open war in the Sadr Adalat and the Supreme Court, and a blow-up in the Military Board were among the main centres of dispute during 1843; but it was the Military Board which made the loudest noise. When Elphinstone had superceded the incompetent Secretary, Moberley, by appointing, McNeill to the Board, Moberley had complained. The Court of Directors had replied to his memorial by authorizing his reappointment but without referring to any specific vacancy.

Tweeddale wanted to know why Military Board Members interfered with the Secretary's duties. The Board answered that the stock books giving the official value on all military equipment had

[1] Walter Elliot to Elphinstone, ibid. 8 February and 25 March 1843.
[2] ibid. 8 February 1843.
[3] ibid. 25 March 1843. *Note:* Sim was a Member of the Military Board.

merely been transcribed from the entries of the previous year and that the Secretary had not even been aware of the fact; moreover, after Moberley had made alterations of Rs. 23,000 and returned the books marked as corrected, another Rs. 70,000 in omissions and under-charges, not to mention Rs. 50,000 worth of steel scabbards for cavalry sabres, were found to have been completely over-looked. Further searching in the commissariat, gun-carriage, and ordinance departments, showed the error amounting to 5 out of a total of 105 lakhs.

The whole question went before the Government in September 1843. Elliot wrote: 'Sim and McNeill have had the whole battle to fight. Ketchem, the old ass, leant to the Secretary and Hutchins, tho he concurred entirely with the other two, got a sick certificate to the Cape. . . . There is nothing in the least affecting Moberley's integrity or that of his Clerks. It only shows him to be a very stupid, thick-headed, obstinate man, entirely in the hands of his servants.'[1] Two months later, the Governor dismissed McNeill, explaining that the act was not his as he was merely obeying orders, and ordered McNeill to rejoin his regiment.[2]

With this act, the fat was in the fire. In the early stages of the struggle, Elliot felt that McNeill would obtain no redress from the Court of Directors. The Home authorities seemed to Elliot to be actuated mostly by personal feelings as could be seen in their recommendation of Lushington's relations, in their advocacy of Astell's friend (Moberley), and in their treatment of the important decisions of Elphinstone's Government. Recent Court dispatches 'could only have been written from private information because there was nothing of the sort on record'.[3]

All of these circumstances coupled with the very constitution of the Court itself make me hopeless of redress from that quarter, and unless the Board of Control take it up, the game is up. Chamier who is a dirty dog fully concurred with the Governor and even out-Heroded Herod. . . . He hates McNeill. Some personal slight. Some breach of ettiquette that occurred years ago has long caused them to meet without acknowledging each other . . . Chamier is also friendly with Moberley.[4]

However, as the affair simmered and bubbled through the next year, Moberley's incapacity became so apparent that the Court

[1] Elliot to Elphinstone, 22 September 1843, op. cit.
[2] Elliot to Elphinstone, 25 November 1843, ibid. [3] ibid. [4] ibid.

found itself embarrassed.[1] Facts brought to light combined with pressure in England forced the Court to alter their views. Tweeddale was ordered to reconsider arrangements in the Military Board.[2] In this manner, one affair in Madras went full circle.

Elliot's opinion of the Governor hardened and his disgust increased as he observed the plots and counter-plots: 'If only [Tweeddale] had enough ability to think for himself. But his conscious ignorance, his vanity and Scotch cunning drive him to seek the aid of irresponsible advisers and he is thus led into erroneous and wavering conclusions. He is horribly suspicious and always thinks there is some underhanded object in what is told him.'[3] Lane and Underwood '[pulled] the wires'; but Lane, as Private Secretary, was at least the open and acknowledged adviser while 'William Underwood [was] a dirty, low, intriguing fellow'.[4] John Thomas seemed to be the only highly placed person who was still generally respected; but his voice was little heard at Government House. Henry Chamier, that bitter and hypersensitive Councillor whose vanity would have made him most easy to conciliate, was excluded from Guindy and, as a result, was allowing his natural wit and his great knowledge of the Secretariat to 'add gall to his ink' in writing a contrary minute on almost every issue.[5] A decision had only to mis-fire or go wrong and Chamier's minutes would rise from the records where they slumbered and explode underneath the Governor.

Word of a flickering of mutiny in the 6th Light Cavalry and 47th Native Infantry Regiments, was followed by news that Lord Ellenborough had ordered all of the advanced units of the Madras Army back to their stations within the Presidency. This embarrassment, reflecting as it did upon the whole Presidency, provoked Elliot to write: 'Had Lord Tweeddale been a man fitted to carry out the obnoxious order regarding batta, without injuring the temper and character of this army, there would have been an excuse; but he has done more to create discontent during the last 12 months than all the obnoxious orders of the Home Government in their dissimulation.'[6] Elliot could not reconcile the Duke of Wellington's disposal of his Indian patronage with his reputation for honest dealing. In gloomy words, he wrote: '[Wellington] has sent out a

[1] Elliot to Elphinstone, 20 May 1844.
[2] ibid. 11 June 1844.
[3] ibid. 25 March 1843.
[4] ibid. 13 May 1845.
[5] ibid. 22 October 1843.
[6] ibid. 17 February 1844.

man whose notorious unfitness he must have known. . . . I fancy, however, that few people trouble their heads much about the minor Presidencies and, after all, there is an elasticity and resiliance in a long established system of administration that prevents the spread of any general disorder or injury.'[1] There is little doubt that Elliot blamed the Commander-in-Chief (Tweeddale) for mutiny and unrest in the army.

Meanwhile, paralysis spread into many of the activities which had been the pride and joy of Elphinstone and Elliot. Not only did construction on the Western Road and on the Wallajanagar Railroad come to a stop, but plans which had been made for the development of education, especially in the university, the medical and engineering colleges, and the proposed provincial schools, were held up. Progress was at a standstill. Vacancies in the colleges had not been filled. All communications from the Government on the subject had ceased. Permission even to print the second Annual Report on education, that for 1842, had been denied.[2] Summarizing the troubles of education late in 1843, Elliot remarked: ' I hear the Government was safely delivered a few days ago of a minute on the affairs of the university, the jist of which was "I have watched the progress of National Education in Europe for the last 20 years".'[3] Finally, in January of 1844, Elliot was so discouraged by the damper which the Court's latest dispatch had put on the university that he resigned from the College Board. John Norton, the Advocate-General, and a highly respected member of Madras society, was ready to follow Elliot's example.[4]

The Marquis of Tweeddale was primarily a soldier, having served in Canada during the War of 1812 and under Wellington in the Peninsular war. He hoped for a chance to see action in India.

Soon after he took charge of the Government, Tweeddale wrote to the President of the Board of Control, Lord Fitzgerald, that he was having trouble finding out what was going on. 'When a new Governor arrives', he remarked, 'people lay on their oars, waiting to learn what the system is to be [and] it is

[1] Elliot to Elphinstone, 23 January 1844. Elliot may not have known that Tweeddale's three daughters were married to the 2nd Lord Wellington, Lord Ripon, and Lord Dalhousie (the future Governor-General).

[2] ibid. 22 September 1843.

[3] ibid. 25 November 1843.

[4] ibid. 23 January 1844. Norton's writings are listed in Bibliography.

difficult to see the exact colour of things.'[1] From the newspapers and the public it was apparent that jobbing had been rampant. It was obvious that the system would not do; therefore, civil and military personnel had been told from the beginning that, while 'the road to Patronage [was] kept fairly open', no one was to expect any advancement unless they could demonstrate a thorough knowledge of their duties.[2] The only obstacle which the Governor could see to his plan of 'stirring up the Service',[3] was the system of Home patronage.

Tweeddale's first collisions were with the Secretaries. What had filled him with consternation upon his arrival in Madras had been the discovery that his predecessor had filled up the high positions with acting appointments, which left him 'the odium of not confirming them'.[4] Chamier had been sent on sick leave to Bangalore, 'which was all an excuse' for he was living all the time at Guindy,[5] in order that Clerk could be made Acting Chief Secretary. Elliot had been made Acting Revenue and Judicial Secretary. As he put it, 'These are recommended as the most perfect Servants in the Presidency who I am satisfied are not trustworthy after a few minutes conversation. I hope you will remember if I am condemned for not paying attention to what are called "powerful letters".'[6] The Secretariat threw cold water on his enquiries, denied responsibility for previous actions, and withheld information and official documents in their offices.

One example of the unreliability of officers in the Secretariat was considered to be the maladministration of the Durbar's affairs during the minority of the Nawab, affairs for which the Company was responsible. It had been difficult for the Governor to obtain necessary information and but for the help he had received from Charles Lushington he might not have been successful. The Masnad Agent, whom Elphinstone had appointed only the week before Tweeddale's arrival, had been replaced of necessity in order to have 'a confidential person about the Nawab'.[7] To Fitzgerald he wrote: 'I hope you will agree to my view of the Secretaries neglect in the Nawab's business. I will undertake to

[1] Lord Tweeddale to Lord Fitzgerald and Vesey, 20 October 1842, *Tweeddale Collection* (IOL: Eur. MSS. F. 96). Home Private Letter Book, I, p. 8.
[2] ibid. [3] ibid.
[4] ibid. 26 November 1842.
[5] ibid. 26 November 1842 and 23 April 1843.
[6] ibid. 20 October 1842. [7] ibid.

say no business can go on if such conduct is sanctioned. *Great jobbing has taken place* amongst the European Servants, which loosens the steadiness of the Natives, and hence is the cause of so much roguery.'[1]

Another example given by the Governor against the Secretariat was its handling of troubles in the Accountant-General's Office. A Court dispatch of 1841 ordering an enquiry into the outstanding balances in this office, together with all other outstanding balances, 'was kept secret from [Tweeddale]'.[2] The Accountant-General had come to the Governor and asked that Rs. 3,70,000 might be written off.[3] When Tweeddale had written a minute expressing shock and concern over the unbusinesslike and ignorant methods of accounting which prevailed, a dispatch had been produced to show that old balances were to be inquired into and irrecoverable balances struck off. To James Lushington, the Court Chairman of the previous year, the Governor wrote: 'You will agree . . . that the Secretary should have supplied me with the letter. It is the least he could have done. The consequence has been that I have called for all letters addressed by the Court of Directors to this Government which have *not* been complied with. This is tantamount to my saying to the Secretaries, "I will know what is in your offices whether you choose to tell me or not." '[4]

The result of this dissatisfaction with the working of the various departments in Madras was a predictable reshuffling of appointments and a general shakeup of the central administration. Lushington's departure from the Council, a fact which Tweeddale constantly bemoaned, left the Governor with Bird, who supported him, and Chamier, who was only lukewarm at best. Tweeddale would have preferred Drury or Thomas instead of Chamier in the Council. Instead, he brought them into the Secretariat. For much of 1843, while Drury was Commissioner in Madura, Thomas carried the whole load. Expressing his satisfaction with this arrangement, Tweeddale wrote: 'As Clerk thinks so much of his own qualifications, I rather think if you ask Mr. Melville, he will tell you Mr. Thomas who has succeeded him has put more business through his hands single-handed, in charge of two Secretary's

[1] Tweeddale to Fitzgerald and Vesey, 23 February 1843, p. 79.
[2] Tweeddale to James Lushington, 23 April 1843, ibid. p. 130.
[3] Elliot wrote Elphinstone that one deficiency (a half lakh) was found to have existed since 1804 (in his letter of 22 September 1843, *EC*, op. cit.).
[4] Tweeddale to Lushington, 23 April 1843, op. cit. p. 131.

duties, than his predecessors have done in any month since they have been in office.'[1]

After five months in office, the Governor wrote a general treatise in which he defined the problems and requirements of the Presidency. He was determined to put people in their proper places, establish discipline, and improve methods in the offices and boards so that the distance between Madras and London would not be felt. 'I feel that there is no reason', he wrote Fitzgerald, 'why your interest here should not be easily managed, as my Estate is at home.'[2] At Yester House, fixed rules were laid down which were known both to the Marquis and to his Factor. Tweeddale supposed that the same rules applied in Madras. 'I see no business of work here', he commented, 'that I have not seen under a different name at home, whether agricultural, engineering, bookkeeping, building, irrigating, or whatever.'[3]

The great object of any Government, was to relieve people of unnecessary burdens. Natives had good reason to complain of exactions from Native servants. If these officers were to obtain regularly twice the chargeable transit and port duties, amounting to 17 per cent on the value of articles in commerce, amounts paid above the stipulated land revenue were probably proportional. Observing that there was no lack of Tahsildars who were guilty of irregularity but who were kept in office by Collectors, 'because they [were] clever fellows', Tweeddale argued against more Indians in revenue work and against their elevation to higher positions in the Collectorates.[4]

The arguments have a liberal sound, are very catching, and plausible for those who are not responsible for the Collection of Revenue. Everyone must see that this country, when civilization has been established, must be governed by descendants of the former sovereigns. In the meantime, it is our duty to establish a feeling of honesty as the guiding principle of a Native Servant's conduct to the administration of his office.[5]

Just as wise regulations in the past had checked the improper exactions made by European officers, so more wise rules would be necessary to check current bad practices.

[1] Tweeddale to Fitzgerald, 23 February 1843, ibid. pp. 84–85.
[2] Tweeddale to Fitzgerald, 23 February 1843, op. cit. p. 85.
[3] ibid. [4] ibid. [5] ibid. p. 87.

Tweeddale could see much that was wrong with the Europeans servants as well. Members of the Council and of the Boards, together with the other officers in Madras, were, in his opinion, against discipline. Feelings for friends and relations in the *mufassal* ('country work') surmounted feelings of responsibility for the whole administration. Instead of trying to improve his ability when in the districts, an officer spent his time trying to manipulate his influence with the Governor.[1]

> I am convinced that unless as much pain is taken to give the young civil servants as thorough a practical knowledge of their business as Collectors as their education at Haileybury gives them classical and scientific knowledge as gentlemen, no great improvements will take place in the country. You may see a Sir Thomas Munro occasionally; but you will never see the number of such persons at one time that is absolutely necessary for doing justice to the inhabitants.[2]

> If Europeans were taught in the practical duties for which their Indian subordinates were employed, they would be able to take practical steps to stop pilfering. Not until the Company's Civil Servants were equal to their duty in the districts would it be wise to employ more Indians. Tweeddale went as far as to suggest that periodic examinations, as were used in the British army and navy, might well be introduced as the best means for promotion in the service.

By May and June of 1843, however, Tweeddale's ambitious plans for sweeping reforms in the administration were running into heavy weather. His attempts to 'ransack' and 'remodel' every office were being met by 'one gentleman in Council who [gave him] more business than [was] either convenient . . . or necessary'.[3] His wish 'to expose everything to daylight' and his determination that the Governor and not the Secretaries should govern was not proving to be so easy. To James Lushington he confessed: 'I am astonished with what I see here. They are excellent people; but between ourselves, have been let loose. Unfortunately, I am the one to draw them up into their places.'[4] What puzzled the Governor was the notion of responsibility commonly held in Madras. He could see no distinction between his Factor's responsibility to himself and to his private estate and his Collector's

[1] Tweeddale to Fitzgerald, pp. 88 90. [2] ibid. pp. 140, 145.
[3] 12 June and 12 May 1843.
[4] Tweeddale to Lushington, 12 June 1843, ibid. p. 148.

responsibility to himself and his Government. He equated the District Collector with the Estate Factor. As Upper-Factor, the Governor was to carry out the letter of the Court's instructions. As Under-Factor, the Collector was to carry out the letter of the Governor's orders. Apparently, Tweeddale expected a close correlation between thought and action, between policy and practice.[1]

One month later the Marquis, while sticking stubbornly to his theories and his expectations, was showing signs of fatigue. Working from six in the morning until five o'clock in the evening trying to mark every paper so that his subordinates would see that there was no excuse for failure, and entertaining during the evenings so that officers whom he upbraided would know that he bore them no ill-will, the pace was beginning to tell upon the Governor and Commander-in-Chief. He wanted to hold the key to every office so that he could open each door and see for himself that every department was in order. Office work was to be looked upon as no more than a mechanical arrangement. All depended upon how smoothly the machinery was operated.[2]

From this time onward, intrigues and designs against him were Tweeddale's increasing concern. As he put it: 'I used to think how delightful it must be to carry on the duties of Government in the Indian fashion, in a Secret Council. I have quite changed my mind. Experience has taught me now to prefer an open assembly of gentlemen where there is a check . . . on intrigues.'[3] If only, in addition to the army and civil lists, 'a list of consanguinity, family connexion, and favours received by Servants of the Company [were] also published', the Home authorities would have been able to understand the difficulty which the Governor was meeting on every turn.[4] Intrigue, 'for which Madras [was] so famed',[5] became the recurring theme of the Governor's letters for the rest of his service in India. Writing to Lord Ripon, who succeeded Lord Fitzgerald as President of the Board of Control, he complained: 'You cannot be aware of the difficulties I have met with since I have been here from intrigue and still have to contend with. Madras has long favoured and well it deserves the name. They have got into such habits and have so lost the European views of

[1] Tweeddale to Lushington, p. 149.
[2] Tweeddale to Fitzgerald, 10 July 1842, ibid. p. 151.
[3] ibid. p. 151.
[4] ibid. p. 150.
[5] Tweeddale to Sir Charles Napier, 13 October 1846, ibid. II, pp. 211–12.

Government that one is obliged always to be on his guard with them.'[1] In 1845, he expressed similar thoughts to the Duke of Richmond: 'The difficulties of getting anything done here, however much approved of, requires half a Governor's time. The intrigue is insufferable. [It] is encouraged by the power of memorials to the Court whenever a servant or officer finds things not going to his taste.'[2] The opposition and secret intrigue of influential persons reached a stage in 1846 when the Governor did not feel he could carry out a measure without first going minutely into it, a procedure which almost brought the making of decisions to a standstill.[3]

Already, by 1845, Tweeddale was writing that he had no chance of anything in India, no chance for the field command which he so ardently desired and no chance for anything beyond a monotonous life at Madras of which he expected soon to be very tired.[4] Thereafter, references to intrigue and occasions for pressure against the Governor increased. He became the regular target of the local press; he was criticized in England; and he was attacked in the House of Lords. The two most important causes of antagonism, in both of which private interests were arrayed against him, were blame for permitting religious discrimination in Government-supported schools and responsibility for mutiny in the Madras Army, with harshness against its officers.[5] However, all of this pressure developed after steps were taken to deal with the decay of administration in Guntur and, therefore, is not material to this study.

Having thus obtained two by no means comprehensive interpretations of events in Madras which establish the virulent intrigues of the British rulers, it is important to discover how the

[1] Tweeddale to Lord Ripon, 2 October 1844, ibid. I, pp. 360–2.

[2] Tweeddale to the 5th Duke of Richmond, 23 February 1845, *Richmond Collection* (Chichester: County Record Office, Goodwood Archives).

[3] Tweeddale to Lord Ripon, 19 September 1846, op. cit. II, p. 206.

[4] Lord Tweeddale to the Duke of Richmond, April 1845, *Goodwood Archives* (Chichester: County Record Office).

[5] It should be mentioned that Tweeddale was an evangelical and a supporter of missionary activity. His correspondence from 1845 to 1848 is filled with his views of the religious controversy. His leading critic and opponent both in India and later in England was Malcolm Lewin. Tweeddale strongly opposed government interference with indigenous religions; however, his private support in Tinnevelly, aroused opposition. See *Proceedings at a Public Meeting of the Hindoo Community* [*of Madras*], *on 7th October 1846* (Madras: The Hindoo Press, 1846). (IOL: Tract 633.)

membership and the business of the Board of Revenue were influenced by these happenings. The departure of John Sullivan and Charles Cotton for Home in 1841 had led to Charles Lushington becoming President and George Drury becoming Second Member. Walter Elliot had remained as Third Member and Alexander Maclean, as Temporary Fourth Member.

Maclean's position was anomalous. In 1838, after twenty-one years in India without a furlough, Elphinstone put him on the Board of Revenue as Temporary Fourth Member in order to assist in eliminating arrears of work and to fill in for Walter Elliot who was busy as his Private Secretary. This acting appointment was only one of a series by which Maclean had managed to stay away from his district (Chingleput)[1] since 1835. His reputation for jobbing and gaming at the Presidency, instead of hard work in the *mufassal*, and his incessant pressure upon the Governor for promotion was tolerated with remarkable restraint. He scorned the offer of the Collectorship of Malabar. He protested against Drury's appointment to the Board. He made jealous references to Elliot's being his junior. He detailed the faults of his seniors in arguing for his own permanent appointment to the Board. He lamented against his own continual supercession.[2]

In 1843, two vacancies occurred in the Board. Drury, who had been deputed as a Special Commissioner to Madura, became a favourite of Tweeddale and upon his return to Madras replaced Thomas as Chief Secretary to the Government. Montgomery, the Acting Second Member who had taken Drury's place, was deputed as a Commissioner to the Northern Circars (specifically, to Rajahmundry). Andrew Robertson, 'a very gentlemanlike agreeable colleague' but one whose health unfitted him for work and whose 'want of mofussil experience [hindered] him from being of much use even in discussion', became Second Member.[3] The Temporary Fourth Membership was left vacant when

[1] Under Tweeddale he was Principal Collector and Magistrate of Cuddapah though he never went up to his station.

[2] Maclean to Elphinstone, 13, 17, 20, and 24 February 1840, *EC* (IOL: Eur. MSS. F. 87), Governor's File of Letters Received, vol. vi, Nos. 44, 51, 55, 57 (in Box 2–E). Elphinstone to Maclean, 13 February, 14, 18, 21 and 23 November 1840, 14 February and 8 December 1841, and 22 February and 22 July 1842, ibid. Governor's File of Letters Sent (Box 3–A).

[3] Walter Elliot to Elphinstone 13 May 1843, ibid. (Box 10-D), No. 41. Walter and Maria Elliot, 25 March and 21 April 1843 also.

Maclean obtained a position as Acting Second Judge of the Sadr Adalat, Dickinson having gone to the Hills on sick leave.

Seeing the Board's capability to do its work thus endangered, 'Old John Dent',[1] that 'very soft good fellow' whose own failing health made it difficult for him to carry his share of the load, approached the Governor about a secretary for the Revenue Board Office, going so far as to suggest Thomas Pycroft who was just back from furlough.[2] The First Member was almost told that he was jobbing and the Board, in consequence, were 'saddled' with Edward Lowell.[3]

What had for long been a chronic problem, however, now aroused alarm. There began a protracted series of arguments in the Council—actually a continuation of argument from 1837—about how to solve the problems of the Board. In these, John Bird set the tone on one side and was joined by the Governor while Henry Chamier took the opposite side.

Chamier brought up the matter on 5 May 1843. Arrears of work were much heavier than had been supposed previously and it was imperative that the Board should be given every possible assistance. He thought that the suggestion made by the Board itself in 1837, that they be permitted to divide their labour instead of reaching all their decisions collectively, should be permitted. He was also of the opinion that the strength of the Board should be kept up to the authorized level of four members until the arrears were wiped out. Either the Temporary Fourth Member who was acting as a Judge of the Sadr Adalat should resume his duties on the Board or someone else should be appointed to act for him.[4]

Chamier's minute was followed the next day by a minute from Bird. Bird did not feel that the Council should prescribe rules by which the Board should dispose of its business. Board Members themselves were the best judges of how their work should be done. It would be better, he thought, to supply the Board with another Deputy Secretary or an efficient Assistant than to interfere with the practical working of the Board as a collective body. He agreed that it was not right that a Temporary Member of the

[1] Walter Elliot to Elphinstone, 25 March and 14 July 1843, ibid.
[2] ibid. [3] Walter Elliot to Elphinstone, 25 March 1843, ibid.
[4] Minute by Henry Chamier, 5 May 1843, *MRP* (280: 37: 5038–42), No. 7 of 11 July 1843.

Board should receive pay for that office when doing duty in the Sadr Adalat.[1]

Tweeddale defended the arrangements which already existed. In view of the fact that a Commissioner to the Northern Circars had been appointed, it was not wise to increase the number of members on the Board; moreover, since Maclean's previous experience showed him to be more fitted for the duties of the Sadr Adalat, it would be better to keep him there and to abolish the Fourth Membership.[2]

Chamier wrote another minute in which he adhered to his original position. He felt it was a pity to abandon the object of keeping the Board numerically complete as long as a salary for a Fourth Member was drawn from the Treasury and as long as the Board's work was so far behind. An extra Assistant in the Secretariat of the Board would not meet the need adequately, as Chamier saw it. Furthermore, as far as Maclean's fitness was concerned, the Junior Member of Council preferred not to give an opinion at all. He merely stated that if the position were going to be abolished as proposed, then the Civil Auditor would be obliged to apply to Maclean the rules for granting deputation allowances to persons out of employ.[3]

While Bird agreed with Chamier that the Fourth Membership of the Revenue Board should either be filled or abolished altogether, he expressed his opposition to its abolition for as long as the salary of the position was being drawn by Maclean.[4] Tweeddale agreed with Bird and the opinion of the Government was recorded in a *Minute of Consultation* on 8 July 1843, as follows: 'His Lordship in Council is of the opinion that the most efficient and expeditious mode of conducting and performing the business of their office may be left to the consideration and judgment of the Board of Revenue.'[5] In this way the pen of Tweeddale's troublesome Junior Councillor was stopped—at least for a time.

The Governor, in the meanwhile, had been assiduously courted by John Dent whose concern for the work of the Board would

[1] Minute by John Bird, 6 May 1843, *MRP* (280: 37: 5042–4), No. 8 of 11 July 1843.

[2] Minute by Lord Tweeddale, 10 June 1843, *MRP* (280: 37: 5045–8), No. 9 of 11 July 1843.

[3] Minute by Henry Chamier, 17 June 1843, *MRP* (280: 37: 5049–52), No. 10 of 11 July 1843.

[4] Minute by John Bird, 19 June, ibid. (p. 5053), No. 11.

[5] Minute (Lord Tweeddale) of Consultation, 8 July 1843, ibid. No. 12.

not allow him to become dismayed at Tweeddale's first rebuffs. Dent was successful in winning the Governor's friendship and, consequently, in obtaining the services of Thomas Pycroft as Acting Sub-Secretary to the Board. Elliot was happy that someone on the Board had the ear of the Governor, thought that Dent was doing good for the administration, and was especially glad for the help of Pycroft, 'a very efficient clever little fellow' who deftly took charge of the Revenue Office and did most of the paper work.[1]

As a result of the Board's deficiencies, Elliot had little time for leisure during 1843 (nor in 1844). He wrote to Elphinstone in September: 'I have attended much more sedulously than I used to do to the business of the Board as I think I am in duty bound; and this year have written nearly all the settlement reports besides some other reports having general subjects connected with the transit duties, cowles, surveys, &c.'[2] Nevertheless, the work of the Board slipped further and further behind.

Heavy arrears in the Board of Revenue moved Chamier to record another minute on 17 May 1844. Unless the work of the Board done jointly were divided among the Members by a regular system of allotment and the decisions of individual Members were recognized and sanctioned by the Government, all calls by the Government for reports would be utterly useless; moreover some reason would have to be given to the Court of Directors as to why the problem remained unsolved.[3]

Bird regretted as much as Chamier that the arrears of business in the Revenue Board were so great but he was not prepared to condemn the Board. He was willing to see work divided as much as possible but he did not think that joint responsibility should be abandoned. If it was considered desirable, he could see no objection in adopting the Board's request for the services of a Fourth Member until the arrears were eliminated.[4]

The Governor noted that this was not the first time that his Government and previous Governments had dealt with the problem—and probably not the last. He pointed out that one of two

[1] Walter Elliot to Lord Elphinstone, 19 August 1843, *EC* (IOL: Eur. MSS. F. 87), Miscellaneous Letters (Box 10–D), No. 41.

[2] Elliot to Elphinstone, 22 September 1843, ibid.

[3] Minute by Henry Chamier, 17 May 1844, *MRD* (280: 53: 6297–303), No. 4 of 24 September 1844.

[4] Minute by John Bird, 15 June 1844, ibid. No. 5.

facts should be established. Either the individual Board Members had neglected their duty or the Revenue Board's system was altogether inefficient. Whether the inefficiency was inherent to the system or capable of practical remedies had to be discovered. The tremendous arrears should never have been allowed to accumulate; moreover, the very existence of such arrears made it all the more difficult to determine where the real fault lay. The Governor had not yet been able to form a confident opinion of how to solve this most difficult problem or of how to revise the system. He added: 'But in justice to the Members of the Board, I must declare my conviction that I believe they are zealous in the discharge of their duties and I have reason to believe that they have made every exertion to get rid of the arrears.'[1] Still, delays in forwarding to the Government certain reports from the districts were surprising. For example, the Report on the Revenue Administration of Madura, which the Board ought to have known about without much reference, had yet to come before the Government although it had been sent down to the Board more than twelve months before. There could be no doubt but that the Board's regular work was both overwhelming in amount and very complicated in form. In addition, during the past two years, 'most important and [special] subjects requiring the deepest consideration [had] come under discussion . . . which must have engaged much of the individual as well as collective attention of the Members and which naturally [caused] considerable delay in bringing up the ordinary business of the Revenue Department'.[2] These extenuating circumstances had called for patience and restraint from the Government. The Governor concluded his defence of the *status quo* with the words: 'The more I have become acquainted with the general system of revenue, the greater are the difficulties of a change which present themselves to my mind and which would also deter me from hastily assenting to a proposition for defining the system of conducting business in a Board so constituted.'[3] In this way, the lid was put on the subject once again.

What is important here is not how the problem of arrears in the

[1] Minute by Lord Tweeddale, 3 August 1844, *Tweeddale Collection* (IOL: Eur. MSS. F. 96), Governor's Minute Books, III, No. 82, pp. 400–4. Also in *MRP* (280: 53: 6315 ff.), No. 6 of 24 September 1844.

[2] Minute by Lord Tweeddale, 3 August 1844, ibid. [3] ibid.

Board of Revenue was solved—the problem was still chronic and serious over a decade later.[1] It is sufficient simply to establish the fact of these arrears; for this provides one reason why the administration in Guntur was allowed to slip beyond the proper control of the State authorities.

A Board is by its very nature a cumbrous and slow instrument of administration; moreover, by its nature it is conservative in its operations. Continuity, tradition, deliberative decisions, and unanimity brought about by compromise are necessary and logical features of a Board. When the intrigue of Madras and the extraordinarily complex and heavy duties of the Revenue Board are combined with those qualities which are inherent to a Board, it is not surprising to discover that the Madras Board of Revenue was not able to satisfy the demands of government.

[1] Ricketts, *Report of the Commission for the Revision of Civil Salaries and Establishments* (Madras, 1858), I, pp. 160 ff.

XIV

THE INVESTIGATION, 1845

We have already shown (in chapter XIII) that special investigations into the affairs of particular districts were far from being strange or rare phenomena in the administration of the Madras Presidency. Indeed, as early as February, 1843, the Madras Council had been unanimous in the opinion that the causes of the rapid decline of revenue in the Northern Circars and the large outstanding balances against the Zamindars of the region should be ascertained without delay. For this purpose, Sir Henry Montgomery had been sent to look into the condition of Rajahmundry District, to discover its causes, and to suggest the remedies which would be required to restore the administration of the district to a healthy condition.[1]

Rajahmundry was another Telugu district which, lying at the mouth of the Godaveri River, was identical in almost every way to Guntur. George Smith, the Collector, had spent almost all of his twenty years of service in the district (a very rare circumstance for those days). The wife of James Thomas, the Zillah Judge, was probably referring to Smith when she gave her remarkable definition of 'a crack Collector' as one who makes a point of keeping up the revenue in defiance of impossibilities.[2] Montgomery found that Smith had all but abandoned the administration of his district to the tender mercies of the Desasthas in the Huzur Cutcherry and that this in turn had led to pressures from

[1] Minute by Lord Tweeddale, 20 February 1843, op. cit. I, p. 245. Also *MRP* (280: 33: 2376), No. 30 of 7 March 1843.

[2] [Julia Thomas], *Letters from Madras, During the Years 1836–1839* (London: John Murray, 1846), 'By a Lady' anonymously, No. 26, p. 144 (5 November 1839). *Note:* 'There may be a famine, a hurricane; half the cultivators may take refuge in another district in despair; there may be no possible means of obtaining the money: but still the Collector, bullies tyrannizes, starves the people—does what he pleases, in short—and contrives to send in the usual sum to the Board of Revenue, and is said to be a "crack Collector".'

ghaibatu and village officers. Montgomery's discovery of lax management and irresponsibility on the part of Smith led to a head-on collision 'which ended in Smith's removal and Sir Henry as Commissioner being ordered to take charge of the District'.[1]

The *Montgomery Report* was dispatched from Cocanada on 18 March 1844.[2] On 17 May the Governor observed that the materials which were necessary to furnish the Government with a report on the Rajahmundry District, which had now been furnished so ably by Sir Henry Montgomery, had been in the records of the Board all the time. He had no doubt that the Board could produce reports for all the districts and zamindaris of the Northern Circars. The report was sent down to the Board for their observations; and, at the same time, the Board were requested not to keep it for nine months as had done in the case of the *Drury Report* on Madura.[3]

The Board's review of the *Montgomery Report* lasted from 28 May 1844 to 14 July 1845, a period of fourteen months during which the entire membership of the Board was changed. In his minute on the report, dated 6 January 1846, Henry Chamier observed: 'But all the measures that can be devised for this and other Districts will be fruitless so long as an inefficient Board of Revenue is permitted to postpone to any indefinite period the consideration and disposal of important questions.'[4] On 17 April 1846, three days after the Government disposed of the *Montgomery Report*, Walter Elliot submitted his report giving the results of his enquiries into the causes of decay in the Guntur District.

Both the Government and the Board of Revenue had good reason, as can be seen from the *Montgomery Report*, for anxiety over the condition of Guntur. Revenues had dropped to less than half their normal level. The *Jamabandi Report* for 1842–3 (Fasli 1252) had not been sent in until 31 May 1844, and virtually nothing had been done to put into effect the instructions which

[1] Elliot to Lord Elphinstone, 19 August 1843, *EC* (IOL: Eur MSS. F. 87), Miscellaneous Letter File (Box–10–D), No. 41.

[2] Sir Henry Montgomery, Bart., to George D. Drury (Chief Secretary), 18 March 1844, *MRP* (280: 48 and 49: 2090–292), No. 8 of 28 May 1844.

[3] Memorandum by Lord Tweeddale, 17 May 1844, *TC* (IOL: Eur. MSS. F. 96), Governor's Minute Book, III, No. 52, pp. 272–3.

[4] Henry Chamier's Minute, 6 January 1846, *MRP* (280: 79: 2765–75), No. 36 of 14 April 1846.

the Government had issued on 21 November 1842, for the reorganization and renovation of the zamindaris. Despite repeated requests for information, little was known about the private debts of the Zamindars or how they should be resolved and even less was known about the probable future output of the zamindaris. Maintenance allowances had only just been sanctioned for the Zamindars whose villages were under *amani* management. A scientific survey and assessment of the '*zafted*' (attached) estates, under the charge of an Engineer, was to take three years and cost approximately Rs. 75,000. There was known antipathy among the district officers against the Collector and more recently there had been charges accusing Stokes of missionary activities.[1]

On 15 August 1844, news that the health of the Collector of Guntur had broken and that he was going to the Cape on Sick Certificate was submitted to the Government. The Board took pains to point out the peculiar circumstances under which the district was placed by this event. The public debts of the Zamindars stood at 68 lakhs while the private debts were not even known. Measures for strengthening the district administration which were urgently needed required 'the exercise of much talent and experience attended with unwearied zeal'.[2]

A succession of minutes followed. The Governor asked that Stokes be called upon to explain rumours that he was engaging in missionary activities to the neglect of his duty.[3] A few days later, the Governor asked the Board what measures would be needed to restore the district administration to efficiency.[4]

On 7 September Chamier declared that the Board did not know enough to solve the problems of the five large zamindaris of Guntur. Since Lockhart was a complete stranger to the Northern Circars and would be of little use for some time, Chamier suggested the appointment of a Commissioner, some person of

[1] Extract of BOR *Proceedings*, 5 August 1844, *GDR* (5375: 237–48) and *MRP* (280: 52: 6164–75), No. 42 of 10 September 1844. BOR *Proceedings*, 26 August 1844, *GDR* (5375: 297–337), on *Jamabandi Report*, *MRP* (280: 64: 2994–3024), No. 1 of 27 May 1845. *Note:* Both Stokes and Newill subscribed from their own pockets to support an English and Vernacular School recently started by a Lutheran missionary, Rev. Heyer.

[2] Extract of BOR *Proceedings*, para. 4, 15 August 1844, *MRP* (280: 52: 6176–8), No. 43 of 10 September 1844.

[3] Minute by Tweeddale, 27 August 1844, ibid. No. 44, or *TC*, Minute Book, III, p. 425 (No. 91).

[4] Memorandum by Tweeddale, 2 September 1844, ibid. No. 45 (or No. 95).

experience, as the best way of halting the deterioration. What Stokes might or might not have done in missionary work was 'a matter of little moment compared with the evils that [needed] to be rectified'.[1]

Bird wanted a Collector with experience in Guntur or, at least, in the Northern Circars to be employed on an increased allowance such as the Court had suggested in 1842; but if this could not be done, he had to agree with Chamier.[2] Tweeddale agreed with Bird and the matter was shelved pending further information from the Board.[3]

In their answer, the Board explained that they had merely tried to urge Stokes not to delay. Although the causes for Stokes's delay were not known, no reprimand had been intended. The Board, in seeking to assist the Government in selecting a good successor to Stokes, had no wish to ascribe the troubles of Guntur to him; moreover, no news of missionary activity by Stokes had ever been received, either publicly or privately. In the absence of any evidence to this effect, therefore, Stokes would not be asked for any explanations. Finally, since the Acting Collector and Head Assistant had their hands full with the regular administrative work, appointment of a special officer was needed to deal with the urgent problems. Since any extra allowance—the Board suggested Rs. 500 a month—to induce a good officer to stay in Guntur would have required the approval of the Supreme Government in Calcutta, the appointment of a Commissioner was seen as the simplest solution.[4]

In view of the arrears of work in the Revenue Board, Tweeddale wanted to send a Collector rather than a Member of the Board. He regretted that the ruined condition of the district had not been brought to the attention of the Government long ago. He thought that this ruined condition was probably due to the hurricane which had struck the district the previous year. While agreeing that it was impossible for a Collector to do what was necessary to redeem the situation, Tweeddale pointed to the Rajahmundry and Madura Commissions as examples of delay. Surely the required information was right in the Board's Record

[1] Minute by Henry Chamier, para. 29, 7 September 1844, ibid. No. 46.
[2] Minute by John Bird, 9 September 1844, op. cit. No. 47.
[3] *Minute of Consultation*, 10 September 1844, ibid. No. 48.
[4] BOR Secretary to Chief Secretary, 12 September 1844, *MRP* (280: 54: 7235–9), No. 5 of 19 November 1844.

Office. He added: 'If the Board have failed hitherto to obtain the information from the late Collector not previously in their records, I cannot acquit them of neglect.'[1] Nevertheless, the Governor concluded, if the other Members of Government still pressed for a Commissioner, he would not hesitate to select a Member of the Board for the task.

Bird adhered to his earlier view. Stokes, he felt, had failed in his duty. Lockhart was bound to do even worse. Collectors were preferable to Commissioners. Only Dent had any experience in the Northern Circars and he would soon be taking Bird's seat on the Council. The selection of a special Sub-Collector might, in his opinion, have been a good alternative were it not that this action also required sanction from the Government of India.[2]

Finally, but without enthusiasm, the decision was made.[3] Dent would be sent as a Commissioner to Guntur. Another Acting Collector would be appointed lest the Government should seem to be condemning the administration of Stokes; and Lockhart would be moved over to the Judicial Department. An enquiry into the causes of distress in Guntur and a survey of one or two taluks as a model by which the Collector could survey the rest of the district should not take long. A special Assistant and the Commissioner's Native Establishment might even be left behind to give extra help. Then when Dent came into the Council, his practical knowledge would be invaluable.[4]

This plan did not work out so simply. Dent had been ailing. After receiving 'a very unceremonious notice from the Private Secretary',[5] he sent in a Sick Certificate.[6] 'He *really* was ill and went off to Calcutta in a precarious state' where he died six weeks later.[7] Robertson, the next person ordered to go to Guntur, 'had never been efficient and sent in a Sick Certificate immediately'.[8] He went to the Cape of Good Hope and then returned to England.[9] The assignment next fell upon Elliot.

[1] Minute by Tweeddale, 21 October 1844, *MRP* (280: 54: 7239–44), No. 6 of 19 November 1844. [2] Minute by Bird, 31 October 1844, ibid. No. 9.
[3] Minute by Tweeddale, 5 November 1844, ibid. No. 10.
[4] op. cit. Minute by Chamier, 8 November; Memorandum by Tweeddale, 14 November; *Minute of Consultation*, 16 November 1844, op. cit. Nos. 11–14.
[5] Elliot to Lord Elphinstone, 5 January 1845, op. cit.
[6] ibid. J. Dent to GOM, 21 November 1844, *MRP* (280: 55: 7750), Nos. 43–44 of 10 December 1844. [7] Elliot to Elphinstone, ibid. [8] ibid.
[9] Robertson to GOM, 18 December 1844, *MRP* (280: 56: 8122), Nos. 55–56 of 24 December 1844.

Elliot was long overdue for his two months' leave. He and Maria were preparing to meet Elphinstone in Colombo. On Christmas Eve, however, he received the bad news. His feelings were expressed as follows:

About two months ago, Government took into their heads to send a Commissioner to Guntoor to report on the state of the Zemindaries which everyone thought was sufficiently well known already. . . . At any other time, I should have liked this very well, but that it should come at the very moment that I wanted to meet you [Elphinstone] is provoking. But there is no help for these things and I must fulfill my destiny. Maria is much disappointed too . . . she would have remained at Colombo whilst we knocked over Elephants.[1]

Maria was not so tolerant:

I am so angry with everything and every person at present . . . Walter will tell you all about his own affairs. He does not talk much about them, nor do I; but it is very galling to have Mr. Maclean put over him in the Board after so long a time. Had Lord Tweeddale done it at first, I should not have been astonished; but now, I think it is very hard. He has done it too in such a way that he has affronted the Macleans mortally . . . far worse than ever you did. . . . Mr. Maclean says he will go home, but he has taken his seat at the Board nevertheless. He ought to go home if he wishes to save his character.[2]

What tempered the feelings of the Elliots still more at this time was the fact that they were expecting their second child; for although Elliot hoped to finish the work in six months, some thought it might take as much as two years.[3]

The appointment of Walter Elliot—indeed, of any person from the Board—cannot be entirely separated from the intricate intrigues and pressures which were existent at the time; nor can it be seen apart from the problems of the Board of Revenue. The departures emptied the Board and, thereby, increased the scope for jobbing and patronage. Of this Maria Elliot wrote: 'I cannot help thinking this Guntoor business is put upon [Walter]. . . . For they can ill spare him in the Board. None of the other Members do anything; and the arrears of business will be fearful when

[1] Elliot to Lord Elphinstone, 5 January 1845, op. cit.
[2] Maria Elliot to Elphinstone, 20 January and 12 February 1845, ibid.
[3] ibid. *Note:* 'Montgomery did not get back for 18 months though most anxious to escape from Rajahmundry', Elliot to Elphinstone, 26 February.

Walter comes back. They are bad enough anyhow.'[1] George Drury was made First Member, leaving John Thomas as Chief Secretary. Alexander Maclean became Acting Second Member and John Goldingham became Acting Third Member. It is the appointment of Maclean and Goldingham which calls for further explanation.

The anomalous place occupied by Maclean was further complicated when, on 11 October 1844, he was appointed Collector and Magistrate of Cuddapah but ordered to continue to act as Third Judge of the Sadr Adalat 'in the public interest'.[2] For over a year Maclean had been doing battle with an intriguer as fully accomplished as himself. This rival was Malcolm Lewin, the Second Judge. Maclean had also got himself 'into a great scrape in his Turf affairs', having been shown up by the Bangalore Turf Club and declared a defaulter.[3] In December 1844, when Henry Dickinson returned from a long sick leave in the Hills, Maclean was removed from the Sadr Adalat. This was done despite the fact that a permanent vacancy was going to open up on 1 January. Outraged (as he had often been with Elphinstone), Maclean wrote to the Governor:

> I have laboured in that Court on a salary much below that of the other judges for the last two years. To have my hopes and expectations thus crushed in the eleventh hour is most painful and what few public men in my own service have ever been subjected to. The peculiar disadvantages under which I have laboured for the last six years are . . . well known. . . I shall suffer severely in Rank and Station as well as aggrandizement . . . worse, I shall be lowered in the eyes of others.[4]

Having no wish, he said, to return to the Board of Revenue, Maclean assuaged his mortification by threatening to leave the country.

While it thus seemed for a moment that Tweeddale was going to treat Maclean worse than Elphinstone had treated him and while Maclean's own acrimonious conduct in the Sadr Adalat and his tarnished private reputation made him eligible for such treat-

[1] Maria Elliot to Lord Elphinstone, 12 February 1845, op. cit.
[2] Chief Secretary to A. Maclean, 11 October 1844, *MRP* (280: 53: 6787–8), Nos. 8–9 of 15 October 1844.
[3] Elliot to Lord Elphinstone, 20 August 1844, op. cit.
[4] Maclean to Lord Tweeddale, 28 December 1844: *TC* (IOL: Eur. MSS. F. 96), Miscellaneous Letter Book.

ment, the wheels of favour again turned in his direction. Tweeddale, in explaining Maclean's transfer from the Sadr Adalat to the Board of Revenue, indicated that Maclean was unqualified for judicial work and concluded with the words, 'This I did as the next best thing'.[1] Even so, Maclean was soon complaining because the abolition of the Temporary Fourth Membership of the Board meant a retrenchment in his salary to that of his 'gazetted' though unfilled appointment as Collector and Magistrate of Cuddapah.[2]

Finally, there was the appointment of John Goldingham to the Board. As far as can be determined, Goldingham was a quiet, hardworking, and able officer who had left the scrambling after station and privilege to others. With hardly a break, he had been in two of the most stricken stations of the *mufassal* for almost eight years (ten years, if Nellore and Masulipatam are added). Nevertheless, his recall to Madras aroused jealousies from the intriguers. Goldingham became the target of protest and innuendo.[3]

The first person to cry out against the appointment of Goldingham was Alexander Bruce. This former Collector of Guntur, now Civil Auditor, had sorely tried the patience of the former Governor, Lord Elphinstone, by his continual efforts to capitalize upon their family relationship. Like Maclean and Lewin, Bruce was one who wormed and squirmed his way upward but who could not be satisfied even when a good position was offered to him.[4] Now, in a letter to Government, Bruce referred to a verbal intimation which the Governor had given to him promising him the appointment, appealed against the appointment as militating against his prospects, doubted whether he would receive from the Governor in writing what he had received in word, and submitted a memorial to the Court of Directors.[5] Two months later, Bruce reconsidered his rash action, begged to withdraw his former

[1] Lord Tweeddale to Lord Haddington, 25 January 1845, ibid. Home Letter Book, II, p. 35. Also Elliot to Elphinstone, 14 January 1845, op. cit.

[2] Maclean to Government, 22 March 1845; *MRP* (280: 63: 2201–6), No. 1 of 22 April 1845.

[3] While the Elliots were distressed that Walter was put under the orders of the 'chuckle-headed' Drury and 'two Collectors' and that his being junior to Goldingham might hurt prospects for promotion, neither of them said anything against Goldingham's ability.

[4] Lord Elphinstone to Bruce, 15 November 1838, and 11 and 12 October 1839, *EC* (op. cit.), Governor's Letters Sent, I, Nos. 72 and 135 (Box 3–A).

[5] Bruce to Government, 28 January 1845, *MRP* (280: 60: 1087), Nos. 61–62 of 25 February 1845.

letter and memorial, asked that his leave might be cancelled, and requested that he might be allowed to stay on at his post. This the Governor permitted and the matter was dropped.[1]

Little time was wasted by Elliot in preparing for his mission to Guntur. Early in 1845 he asked for and obtained the services of Appa Rao, Huzur Sheristadar of Cuddapah and one of the most able Desastha officers in the Presidency. He obtained permission to employ an establishment costing Rs. 600 a month, together with two properly educated Surveyors, a Medical Subordinate, a Dresser and a quantity of stationery, camp equipment, and supplies. The Board were informed by the Government of the instructions which were being sent to the Commissioner and to the new Acting Collector, Daniel White. Finally, on 17 January, the Government's *Minute of Consultation* was transmitted to Elliot and he was ordered to proceed at once to Guntur and to correspond directly with the Government on all matters of importance.[2]

Elliot left Madras on 3 February. Just before leaving he commented on the fact that the whole hot season lay before him—'the hottest time of the year in the hottest district in India'.[3] Marching nearly all the way from Nellore, his party followed a dreary road along the barren coast and then across 'extensive plains of black cotton soil which are the characteristic feature of the district'. The picture he drew was anything but heartening: 'It is seared and burnt up and so there will be nothing for the eye to rest on, save an interminable expanse of black-maidan, bounded only by the horizon. The villages are built of mud and thatched huts. There are few trees and topes, scarcely any tanks and generally great scarcity of water . . . even for drinking. In a month the scene will be [worse]. You need not suppose . . . that I shall prolong my stay here.'[4] Soon after the Commissioner's arrival in Guntur (16 February),

[1] Memorial by A. F. Bruce, 17 March 1845; Letter from Bruce to Government, 28 March 1845; and Order of Government, 12 April 1845, *MRP* (280: 61–62: 1382, 1403, 2173), Nos. 36, 37, 55, 56 of 18 March and Nos. 51 and 52 of 15 April 1845.

[2] See *MRP* (280: 59: 84, 266–79, 284, 323–5, 573), Nos. 40–41 of 7 January, Nos. 7–9 of 21 January and Nos. 50–51, 67–68 of 28 January 1845.

[3] Elliot to Lord Elphinstone, 2 February 1845, op. cit.

[4] Elliot to Lord Elphinstone, 26 February 1845, *EC* (IOL: Eur. MSS. F. 87), Miscellaneous Letters (Box 10–D), No. 41. *Note:* Elphinstone wrote back from Galle on 29 September 1845 (Box 13), 'Your account of Guntoor is even more

however, there was little time to worry about heat or surroundings.

Assuming that nothing could be taken as true unless checked first hand, the Commissioner by-passed huzur, zamindari, and ghaibatu records and dug straight at the roots whence all information was basically derived. Karnams from the 100 villages nearest to Guntur and belonging to all the zamindaris were ordered to appear before the Commissioner's Cutcherry and to submit their accounts for the past twelve years.[1]

Various excuses drifted in from the villages explaining why it was impossible to come to Guntur. The assistance of the Acting Collector, Daniel White, helped to enforce the order. Village leaders appeared and dutifully presented themselves before the *Pedda Dora* ('Great Lord': Commissioner). But when they were asked to show their records, they merely responded with gestures and sounds of sorrow. The Zamindar had requisitioned the books. Fire had burned the *chawadi* (village office or *choultry*) and all papers had been destroyed. Thieves had broken in and stolen. Storms, winds, and floods had come. White ants and silver fish had eaten. Another man (a close relative) had been Karnam at the time. Sometimes things just disappeared, were misplaced or lost. It was indeed unfortunate. 'Without an exception', reported Elliot, 'they declared that no such accounts existed.'[2]

In a letter to Madras, Elliot explained that he was meeting with severe obstruction, complained of inability to enforce orders, and asked for the powers of a Joint Magistrate.[3] The Government objected[4]; but they did order White to put *peons* at Elliot's disposal and to be as helpful as possible.[5] Elliot replied that White was being very helpful but that unavoidable circumstances would necessitate the absence of White and Newill at times when prompt action was needed to deal with Karnams who were evasive or withheld their accounts.[6]

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disagreeable than I expected. I knew it was a flat district, but I did not know that it was a black treeless plain. I heartily wish you were out of it.'

[1] *Elliot Report*, para. 24, 17 April 1846, *MRP* (281: 20: 7474), No. 39 of 6 December 1847. [2] *Elliot Report*, para. 24, 17 April 1846, op. cit.

[3] Elliot to GOM, 26 February 1845, *MRP* (280: 61: 1203), No. 4 of 11 March 1845. [4] GOM to Elliot, 5 March 1845, ibid. No. 5.

[5] GOM to Daniel White, 5 March 1845, ibid. No. 6.

[6] Elliot and White to GOM, 10 March 1845, ibid. Nos. 73–74 of 18 March and Nos. 39–40 of 25 March 1845. White indicated that Lockhart had given peremptory orders to district and village officers that they were to obey the Commissioner.

After three weeks of floundering around in a sea of suspicions without enough solid facts to make headway, weeks in which formal depositions were taken from the Karnams so that they would be liable to punishment for perjury if their statements were proved false, Elliot finally obtained information regarding the hiding place of records for the village of Takkalapadu, only two miles from Guntur Town. The officers who were sent to execute the warrant of seizure were too late, however, and the records disappeared. Nevertheless, enough solid evidence came to light from this village for the conviction of its Karnams. They were sentenced (under Regulation IX of 1822) to heavy fines and imprisonment for having concealed official documents, misappropriated State funds, extorted money from cultivators, and connived with officers from the Huzur to have their revenue reduced. The example of punishment meted out at Takkalapadu was sufficient to induce several other Karnams to bring out their hidden accounts. Disclosures were undoubtedly accompanied by further gestures and sounds of sorrow.[1]

At this, the district officers under the leadership of the Sheristadar and the Desastha elite in the Huzur Cutcherry took alarm. Acting as a group they bent every effort to stifle the investigation and to counteract the work of the Commissioner. 'They were at once able to act with vigour and concert throughout every part of the district.'[2] Obstacles of every sort, often small, insignificant and time-consuming irritations, were thrown in Elliot's way. As the first effects of the Commission wore off, the Karnams who had confessed took courage and began to show a contumacious spirit. Promises, bribes, threats, and other more subtle pressures were applied to coerce and persuade wavering individuals to hold the line. New disclosures were checked and fresh complaints prevented from reaching the Commissioner.

It was necessary just at this time for the *Jamabandi* of the year (1844–5) to be conducted. White and Newill had to go to opposite ends of the district. Elliot found himself isolated. Without direct magisterial authority he was unable to act on intelligence as it reached him quickly enough to catch the wily local officers. White's specific oral and written orders to the Huzur

[1] *Elliot Report*, para. 24, op. cit. Daniel White to BOR, 10 March 1845, *GDR* (5404: 38–40). BOR Secretary to GOM, 20 March 1845, *MRP* (280: 63: 2297–300), Nos. 55–56 of 22 April 1845. [2] *Elliot Report*, para. 25, op. cit.

officers to do as they were directed by the Commissioner were either circumvented, delayed, or ignored altother. Requests were given every sign of outward respect but nothing was done. A smoke-screen of obeisant deference for a while obscured the fact that every order was being countermanded and every move neutralized. The Commissioner became convinced ultimately that the prevailing deterioration was 'the result of a general and well organized combination of the Collector's Establishment'.[1]

White and Newill completely agreed with Elliot. They also found that village leases had been given on low terms through the connivance of district officers; moreover they too encountered an organized resistance by local forces against their authority. To White it was plain that some secret influence had been at work to impede his exertions and the obvious inference which he drew was that it could not have worked so long and so successfully in the district without the knowledge, the support, and indeed the leadership of the highest Indian officer of the district, the Huzur Sheristadar.[2]

Late in March it was discovered that Nyapati Shashagiri Rao, Ambarkhana Purushothum Rao, Nakkalapalli Subha Rao, and many other district officers had steadily been acquiring land in violation of the Regulations and of the Board's orders of 19 June 1826. District officers could not hold land within the same district where they worked unless it was registered and permitted in a special *dumbala*. Both Elliot and White demonstrated from copies of the regulations and orders which were found in various offices that the district officers were well aware of the rules on land-holding; moreover, they found copies of a circular order issued by Stokes on 28 October 1843, requiring every officer to make a correct, up-to-date statement of his landholdings. Not a single officer had made a return. Indeed, thay all denied ever hearing of the rule.[3]

Elliot's impressions of the situation in Guntur were sent to Elphinstone on 2 April. To him the district was full of corruption and rottenness. 'The reckless improvidence of the Zemindars has been exceeded', he wrote, 'by the rapacity of our own native

[1] *Elliot Report*, para. 25, op. cit.

[2] Daniel White's *Report* to Secretary of BOR, 10 July 1845, *GDR* (58: 5404: 79–139).

[3] ibid. para. 66–70. *Elliot Report*, para. 25, op. cit. White to BOR, 22 March 1845, *GDR* (5404: 63–64).

servants since the surrender of the Estates.'[1] More than half of the last year's revenue remained uncollected. Ryots had regularly purchased the forbearance of the Tahsildars in order that they might obtain rents on favourable terms with reference to the supposedly reduced condition of their villages. 'Such are native revenue servants and such they will continue', thought Elliot, 'as long as their responsibilities are so disproportionate to their emoluments.'[2] He was somewhat surprised that Stokes had allowed matters to come to such a sorry state. Undoubtedly Stokes had become thoroughly disgusted and had lacked the energy to face up to the difficulties so that, when he received a strong rebuke from the Board, he had simply fallen sick and 'chucked up altogether'.[3] In 'Dan' White, Elliot felt he had a person who, though he knew nothing of ryotwari and could not speak a word of Telugu, was a 'sensible accommodating good fellow'.[4]

On 26 April 1845, White suspended the Naib Sheristadar, Nakkalapalli Subha Rao, and on 2 May 1845, Nyapati Shashagiri Rao was also suspended. Both men were charged with seeking to undermine State authority within the district, with organizing the district and village establishment to this end, with diverting State revenues and endeavouring to enrich themselves at the expense of the State, with acquiring land unlawfully and holding it in violation of administrative rules, and with having received gifts and bribes in return for official favours.[5]

Both of these Desastha leaders, however, were undismayed by this turn of events. In fact, because of their more critical position and because they were free from their usual duties in the Huzur Cutcherry, they were able to give all of their time and energy to resisting the danger which threatened them. The Nyapati house in Guntur became the focal point for intrigue and subversive activities during the next four months. All the disaffected officers and leaders assembled around the Huzur Sheristadar. Every Karnam and Ryot who went to the Commissioner's Office was summoned before him and questioned. Local leaders were told that Shashagiri Rao would be reinstated. After all, they were asked,

[1] Elliot to Lord Elphinstone, 6 April 1845, op. cit.
[2] ibid. [3] ibid. [4] ibid.
[5] White to BOR, 26 April, 2 and 20 May 1845, *GDR* (5404: 46–61). White informed the Board that he was acting upon information received from Elliot and that a full report on the conduct of the Sheristadar would be forthcoming. See also *Elliot Report*, Appendix A, op. cit.

had he not been removed from the Huzur twice before? Yet, 'his powerful influence at the Presidency had always restored him'.[1]

Men were sent out into the taluks to bolster up support and to make sure of the hold of the Desastha organization. At the same time, a number of persons who earlier had voluntarily given information to Elliot were made to retract their statements and to send petitions to the Board of Revenue declaring that their former evidence had been cruelly and violently extracted as a result of the harsh treatment meted out to them by the Commissioner and the Acting Collector. Success was confidently predicted by Shashagiri Rao and his followers.[2]

At this time, the very peak of the hot season (April and May), Elliot and Appa Rao, his Sheristadar, decided that evidence of the subversive and collusive operations which obviously had been going on in the district for many years could not be obtained unless they went personally to the fountainheads of all information, namely, to the villages themselves. They determined to make a systematic village by village search of the district.

It must be remembered, however, that the Commission was not shackled by the crushing load of regular administrative duties, financial restrictions, and the constant beck-and-call of the Board of Revenue—circumstances which had to some degree hampered earlier efforts by Robertson, Oakes, Whish, Goldingham, and Stokes to do the same thing. Moreover, there can be no doubt that Elliot and Appa Rao were an extraordinary team, possessing untiring stores of energy and deep insights into the mentality of the village leaders.

Moving under a sky of brass and on earth of iron, with the shimmering glare of white tents or in the stifling air of *dak* bungalows and *chawadis* (or *choultries*), the camp crept forward across the hot plains. Endless and tedious droning voices; steadily scratching pens from Munshis and Maddatgars on grass mats; huddled groups of village leaders in earnest discussion; throngs of idle and curious sitting on their heels in the scarce patches of shade; peons and servants coming and going; pale smoke rising from small cooking fires; parched tongues and soaked clothing: such are the scenes conjured up of the Commission at work. Elliot commented:

[1] *Elliot Report*, para. 26, ibid.

[2] *Elliot Report*, para. 26, op. cit.

This is the hottest plain I have ever been in. The thermometer for the last month has been constantly at 104 and yet I have never felt better in my life. On office days that I was obliged to be out at some of the bungalows on the roads or in tents in places where my inquiries led me, the tables and chairs were so hot . . . that it was hardly possible to touch them. At night my bed was so glowing that the sheets felt as if they had just been under the warming pan. . . .[1]

But there was little time for thinking of the discomforts. The daylight hours were filled to capacity. The Commissioner seldom dismissed his cutcherry staff until half past eight in the evening.[2]

Karnams and Ryots invariably tried to withhold and to hide their true records. Numerous attempts to palm off false records were detected and some records were accepted which defied the closest scrutiny. False accounts were found which had been written years before and kept ready to meet unforeseen emergencies. True accounts were found immersed in tanks and wells, hidden in grain pits, torn up, and burnt. On one occasion when one of Elliot's most active Gumashtas stopped for the night in the *chawadi* of a village, the house was set on fire. With some difficulty, the Gumashta escaped. The village accounts did not.[3]

Elliot proceeded on the assumption that no accounts could be considered as original documents until their authenticity had been tested and retested. Even when second sets were produced, he would continue to probe to make sure that these were not fabrications prepared to deceive the Zamindar. Examples of punishment had to be made of some of the more stubborn village leaders in order that the more timid and reticent officers would take fright and show where their true records were hidden. Often Elliot and Appa Rao would divide a Karnam's or Ryot's family into two groups and, according to a fixed plan, would question or cross-question the groups simultaneously. After finding chinks in the shield of village resistance, whether from discrepant stories or from ill-will within the village, they would use their powers of persuasion so as to arrive at the truth. Even so, in extremity, some Karnam would try to hand over something spurious swearing that it was the bed-rock of truth and would be caught because the

[1] Elliot to Lord Elphinstone, 5 June 1845, *EC*, op. cit.
[2] Maria Elliot to Lord Elphinstone, 8 May 1845, ibid.
[3] *Elliot Report*, para. 27, op. cit.

writing on very old paper was obviously made with fresh ink. 'Long practice and frequent detection', reported Elliot, 'have made the Curnums expert in keeping [the records] in such a form as to cancel their true import in the event of discovery.'[1]

The suspended Sheristadar, meanwhile, began to realize that the Commissioner was making steady if undramatic headway in his enquiries. At last, he took the extreme step of going out into the villages himself so that he could bring his own personal influence to bear right on the spot. He blamed his suspension on betrayals which had been fomented by ill-will from the Sabnavis faction and he made dark threats against any who would dare to disobey his orders.[2]

This action on the part of Shashagiri Rao, however, apparently backfired; for by deigning to descend from the heights without full authority, some of his influence was hurt. Also, by now, other district officers, who were being put in charge of taluk stations as quickly as evidence against the incumbent Amins could be uncovered, were beginning to counter his influence. Finally, although a threat was made that the Sheristadar might have to be put under a *peon* if he continued to obstruct the administration, Elliot and White wisely relied entirely on words rather than on physical force. As Elliot put it in his report: 'Neither this measure [putting him under guard] nor any other of the slightest restraint was employed and he was treated throughout with a degree of consideration of which his conduct showed him to be little deserving.'[3] Probably this restraint and the impact of Elliot's and Appa Rao's words upon the village leaders did more to restore the authority of Government in Guntur than taking the sword of power out of its scabbard could have done.

Simultaneously with the minute examination of village affairs by the Commission, as information was sent by Elliot to the Huzur, the Collector worked to rid the administration of all its corrupting elements. This was not an easy task; for the removal of one layer of officers would soon reveal that the next layer was also connected to the bureaucratic elite of the district. For example, when Dhumul Lakshminarsu Rao and Manur Venkata Krishna Rao, the Amin and the Naib of Sattanapalli Taluk, were

[1] *Elliot Report*, para. 44, op. cit.
[2] *Elliot Report*, para. 26, op. cit. *White Report*, paras. 8–9, 10 July 1845, *GDR* (5404: 79–139).
[3] *Elliot Report*, para. 26, ibid.

removed because they were relatives of the Zamindar and the Sheristadar, it was soon discovered that those below them, who would have succeeded to their positions, were none other than the Zamindar's brother and another near relative. Likewise, after the Amin and the Naib of Chilkalurpad were replaced on similar grounds, the new Peshkar who had been carefully selected from a remote taluk turned out to be the son-in-law of the Amin who had just been removed. The very fact that the Sheristadar alone had seventy-four relatives within the district service made it clear that unusual steps would have to be taken if the power of the old elite of the district were ever to be really broken.[1]

A Maratha Brahman by the name of D. Srinavasa Rao was brought from Poona to take over the Huzur Sheristadarship of the district.[2] About the new Naib Sheristadar we know little more than that his name was Chekkrishna Rao. Quite probably he too was from far away in the hope that no local ties of family or of property would weaken his efficiency or sway his loyalty to his Company superiors.[3] What is significant, however, is that the tradition of employing Maratha Brahmans for managing the district secretariat was maintained.

Elliot pressed forward with the investigation into village affairs until almost every village in the Vasireddy, Sattanapalli, Chilkalurpad, and Repalli Zamindaris together with thirty villages of the Malraju Zamindari (a total of 577 villages in all) had been scrutinized and their records taken as evidence.[4]

Writing to Lord Elphinstone about the results of his investigation, Elliot made the following summary of the district's condition:

> From the effects of long misgovernment, [Guntur] is now in a worse condition than when we received it fifty-seven years ago from the Nizam—probably the most grinding ruler in the peninsula. I was going to say 'in India' but I fancy his brother of Oude beats him. From the same causes, the people are the most demoralized I have ever dealt with; and for lying, cunning, forgery, deceit, perjury, I will back them

[1] *Elliot Report*, para. 58, op. cit.

[2] White to BOR, 15 May 1845, *GDR* (5404: 63–64), reporting his appointment as a temporary measure. White to BOR, 2 June 1845, *GDR* (5404: 71–73), insisting on confirmation, ibid. 19 June reporting that D. Srinavasa Rao resigned from his job in Poona.

[3] White to BOR, 16 May 1845, *GDR* (5404: 64–65).

[4] *Elliot Report*, paras. 27–28, 43–48, op. cit.

against the most accomplished scoundrels of her Majesty's dominions, Norfolk Island not excepted.[1]

In just over six months, Elliot not only completed this immense village to village investigation; but he gathered information upon the debts of the Zamindars and upon the future productivity of the district; and, finally, he supervised a pilot survey and assessment of the villages of Guntur Taluk to serve as a model by which the Collector could complete a survey and assessment of the whole district.

It was the pilot survey and assessment which hastened Elliot's return to Madras. Although the uselessness of throwing away any more money on Munro's old survey system and the advisability of applying the scientific (trigonometrial) system already being used in Bombay had been agreed by the Board, Elliot was ordered to do in Guntur what was in defiance of the very papers he had drafted in Madras. Of the two professional surveyors which he ordered to join him, the one which finally arrived was fit for nothing more than checking the measurements of the Gumashtas. Ten Gumashtas sent from Kurnool because of their surveying experience took such a dislike to Guntur that they went home. Consequently, Elliot himself worked with village blacksmiths in making (35 foot) measuring chains. Confessing his profound ignorance of the art of surveying, Elliot taught a dozen jobless men (*umedwars*) how to survey.[2] At the end of June he reported that the surveying establishment working under him was 'precisely on the same footing in every respect as that employed in the Ceded Districts' by Munro.[3]

Ironically, the Third Member on deputation could make no modifications on his own but had to submit to a Board composed of Collectors. His report that such ancient classifications of

[1] Elliot to Lord Elphinstone, 5 August 1845, *EC* (op. cit.), Miscellaneous Letters (Box 10–D), No. 41.

[2] Elliot to Elphinstone, 26 February 1845, op. cit. Elphinstone to Elliot, 29 September 1845: 'I thought that the trigonometrical survey [was] the basis upon which your Revenue surveys were made and that you only had to fill up the spaces laid down by the Surveyor-General's people and class and assess the lands. As for sending non-professional men who have other duties . . . and are paid for performing those duties at a far higher rate than are surveyors to measure land with a chain, it seems to me preposterous and extravagant.'

[3] Elliot to BOR, para. 4, 23 June 1845, *MRP* (280: 68: 5016–22), No. 71 of 5 September 1845.

soil as still survived were different in every village and by no means correct was not accepted, his simplified system was declined, and a further examination ordered.[1] Tweeddale, looking upon the project 'as one of first importance not only [for] the future well-being of Guntur, but . . . for the whole Presidency',[2] thought it might be advisable for Elliot to come down to Madras for further discussions on the principles he employed. The Board agreed and on 3 September Elliot was ordered down to the Presidency.[3]

Hoping to write his reports in Madras and to be with his wife during her confinement, Elliot had already acted on his own. On 19 August he had sent a letter informing the Government that the investigation of the various subjects contained in his instructions was completed, that the survey of a division of one of the zamindaris was finished, and that he wished to consult the Board's records before submitting his report. He requested permission to defer his report until after his return to the Presidency.[4] He then left Guntur immediately, taking with him the results of his labours in thirty-seven *daftars* and three bundles of *cadjans*. He arrived at Madras on 31 August. His son was born less than a week later. And on 8 September he reported his return to the Government.[5]

When Daniel White fell ill and also had to leave Guntur a few weeks later, a sharp and bitter controversy developed over who should take charge of the district. Henry Dickinson, who had now been Junior Council Member since July, had already expressed the view that a person of such judgement and talent as Elliot, whose work was so highly valued, should finish surveying the whole district.[6] Tweeddale now followed up this view with the opinion

[1] Extract BOR *Proceedings*, 16 June; Elliot to BOR, 23 June; and Extract BOR *Proceedings*, 3 July 1845, *MRP* (280: 68: 5005–43), Nos. 70–72 of 5 September 1845. Maria Elliot to Lord Elphinstone, 9 July 1845, op. cit.

[2] Minute by Lord Tweeddale, 18 August 1845, *TC* (IOL: Eur. MSS. F. 96), Governor's Minute Book, V, No. 16, pp. 39–47. *MRP* (ibid.), No. 73.

[3] BOR Secretary to GOM, 1 September and GOM *Minute of Consultation*, 3 September 1845, *MRP* (ibid. pp. 5077–80), Nos. 89–90.

[4] Elliot to GOM, 19 August 1845, *MRP* (280: 69: 5490), Nos. 32–33 of 23 September 1845.

[5] Elliot to GOM, 8 September 1845, *MRP* (280: 69: 5572), No. 93 of 23 September 1845. Elliot to GOM, 20 October 1845, *MRP* (280: 70: 6122), No. 41, of 4 November 1845. Elliot to Elphinstone, 14 September 1845, op. cit. It cost Rs. 73–9–8 to have these records moved to Madras.

[6] Minute by Dickinson, 21 August 1845, *MRP* (280: 68: 5043), No. 74 of 5 September 1845. He had been Provisional Member since April.

that Guntur should not be left solely in the hands of a Head Assistant (Newill) and that Elliot should take charge of the district without delay.[1] Chamier dissented sharply. He objected that sending Elliot back was inconsistent with the original object of his mission and that the Board could not conclude its important discussions about surveys without its most competent Member.[2] Dickinson concurred with the idea of sending Elliot back without delay.[3] The Governor, considering the circumstances of Guntur, the dangerous influence of the suspended Sheristadar, and the extensive local knowledge which Elliot possessed, thought that the duty of Government to provide efficient management during this emergency could best be met by putting Elliot temporarily in charge.[4] Accordingly, on 6 November, Elliot was instructed to return to Guntur immediately.[5]

Elliot remonstrated: first, because his health also had given way upon his return to Madras and he was under the care of Dr. Sanderson; second, because he had not finished his report; and third, because it was not fair that he should be reduced to the grade of a Collector after his Commission was over.[6] Explaining his position to Elphinstone, who had hoped to meet the Elliots in Ooty, he wrote:

> But I have no doubt I shall have to go . . . and, having entered a protest, I shall not hesitate to proceed. Stokes, the permanent Collector returns [from the Cape] next month and there is a steady Head Assistant in charge so that the measure is as unnecessary as it is unfair. People say that there is an object in keeping me out—that the dominant party may keep one of their own body in. That I am unwilling to believe. . . . At any rate here is the stopper to our hills schemes.[7]

Maria added that Walter would not be allowed to return to the Board 'as they were determined to keep John Goldingham'.[8] She could not believe that the Government could be so wicked or imprudent as to send the oldest Member of the Board back to Guntur.

[1] Minute by Tweeddale, 27 October 1845, *MRP* (280: 70: 6208), No. 12 of 11 November 1845. [2] Minute by Chamier, 20 October 1845, ibid. No. 13.
[3] Minute by Dickinson, 2 November 1845, ibid. No. 15.
[4] Minute by Tweeddale, 5 November 1845, op. cit. No. 15.
[5] *Minute of Consultation*, 6 November 1845, ibid. No. 16.
[6] Elliot to GOM, 10 November 1845, *MRP* (280: 70: 6403–10), No. 18 of 18 November 1845. [7] Elliot to Elphinstone, 13 November 1845, op. cit.
[8] Maria Elliot to Lord Elphinstone, ibid.

When his protest was rejected, Elliot made another appeal pointing out that while Dent and Drury had held the offices of Collector and Magistrate simultaneously with their Commissions, he was being sent back solely as an Acting Collector.[1] Tweeddale answered that the Government would not consider the Commissioner's duties fulfilled until an approved survey and assessment was introduced in the whole district (a task which all agreed might take three years).[2]

The Governor's words called down a furious reply from Chamier who felt that if anyone from the Board should go it should be an Acting Member, preferably Goldingham whose five years in the district made him the logical choice. He declared: '. . . there is no necessity for [Elliot's] return to the district nor can I foresee any result in re-deputing him thither beyond that of keeping Mr. Goldingham in the Board to the detriment of Mr. Elliot, and, as I think, of the whole public service.'[3] Sending Elliot back was contrary to the original purpose of his mission. It would leave the Board without a Member competent enough to discuss the survey question. Chamier even went so far as to hint that Goldingham might have been the cause of the district's sorry condition, a factor which made it even more improper that he should sit in judgement upon Elliot's actions.[4] In fact, if Goldingham were sent back to North Arcot and if Lovell and Cotton returned to their proper stations, the deputation allowances for three acting appointments could be saved.

At this Tweeddale, while emphatically repeating that he would not rest until steps had been taken to rid the district of its evils and to bring it back to health, informed Elliot that he should be prepared to resume his duties as Commissioner to Guntur in a few weeks.[5] 'To this', commented Elliot, 'I can have no objection beyond the needless trouble in entails on me, for there is no earthly necessity for my doing so.'[6] However, the urgency suddenly disappeared. Stokes returned and went to Guntur.

[1] Elliot to GOM, 19 November, *MRP* (280: 72: 7017), No. 52 of 9 December 1845.

[2] Minute by Lord Tweeddale, 24 November 1845, *MRP* (280: 72: 7108), No. 53 of 9 December 1845.

[3] Minute by Chamier, para. 2, 26 November 1845, ibid. No. 56.

[4] ibid. paras. 4–7.

[5] Minute by Tweeddale, 28 November 1845, ibid. No. 58.

[6] Elliot to Lord Elphinstone, 10 December 1845, op. cit.

Throughout the cool weather, Elliot remained in poor health: But as the weather grew hotter he improved and so was able to submit his huge report on 17 April 1846. Three days later, he wrote to Elphinstone: 'I hope to meet you as you pass Madras.... I am still under orders to return to Guntoor but do not think I shall be sent after all; for instead of the improvements in the survey which I carried out there in a few villages, under instructions to follow the rules of the Ceded Districts, the Government ... are meditating the introduction of the Bombay system under scientific officers and in that case there will be no pretext for my going.'[1]

All of Tweeddale's attempts to quell invidious comparisons between officers had in the meantime failed[2]; and vicious attempts were made, apparently by Maclean, to prevent Elliot from re-entering the Board. Nevertheless, on 23 April, Elliot was ordered back to the Board. Maclean protested loudly at being made Acting Third Member and Goldingham prepared to return to North Arcot. On 1 May Dickinson suggested that Goldingham should stay on as Temporary Fourth Member to help rid the Board of its arrears of work.[3] There is little doubt that some officer, either Chamier, Lewin, or Maclean, used this as another club against the Governor by leaking official extracts to the local press. *The Spectator* sardonically referred to Elliot's anomalous mission to Guntur and to his return to the Board, adding: 'Has the Board received of late an accession of business so great as to render its wonted strength unequal to the task imposed upon it? Or does the Noble Marquis think that the mass of habitual arrears will disappear more rapidly when nibbled at by four than hitherto it has done under the operation of three?'[4]

The results of Elliot's investigation were revealed in an immense report of over 400 pages. This report presented the causes behind the decay of the zamindaris, the deterioration of the administration,

[1] Elliot to Lord Elphinstone, 20 April 1845.

[2] *Minute of Consultation*, 23 April 1846, *MRP* (280: 79: 2915), No. 3 of 5 May 1846.

[3] Minute by Dickinson, 1 May 1846, *MRP* (280: 80: 3341), No. 56 of 12 May 1846.

[4] Madras *Spectator*, vol. 10, p. 476, 19 May 1846. *Note:* Soon after this, Maclean was implicated in a loan of Rs. 175,000 to the Nawab of the Carnatic. He retired before action could be taken against him. See *MD* (111: 413), Political Despatch, 24 January 1849.

and the economic depression in the district. It laid bare what had happened to the uncollected balances of revenue which had been accumulating through the past twelve years. It gave facts and figures about the economy, the society, and the administration at great length. It traced the development of the district during the previous sixty years. Seven voluminous appendices enclosed letters between Elliot and White, evidence taken in the villages, correspondence of former Collectors, and other material to back up his arguments. A large number of statistical abstracts was also added. In all, the *Elliot Report* was a monumental piece of work—a goldmine for the historian. Even the précis which the Government requested came to over twenty pages.[1]

Elliot attributed the distress of Guntur District to maladministration. He showed that on former occasions natural calamities and depressed markets had caused hardship but had not permanently crippled the condition of the district. Protracted misrule, first by the zamindars and then by the district officers, had brought misery and destitution which was unparalleled. The district was worse off than when it first came under Company rule. The crowning misfortune, in Elliot's opinion, was a combination of district officers with village leaders which was organized by the elite of the Huzur Cutcherry. This combination had for years systematically diverted revenue from the State treasuries and had exacted extra revenue from the people, deliberately weakening State authority and enforcing its own will upon the district. Admitting that he was scarcely scratching the surface of the total peculations which had occurred, Elliot could prove that at least Rs. 572,801 had been taken from villagers without authorization or acknowledgement and that at least Rs. 51,458 of revenue had been diverted into the pockets of *huzur* and *ghaibatu* officials (not counting Rs. 202,902 proven to have gone to the Zamindars prior to 1842).[2]

After showing in detail that such combinations of district officers were by no means unprecedented, Elliot took pains to point out the causes lying behind such a tradition of collusive organization. He was of the opinion that the same causes would always produce the same effects. In his words: 'We must not

[1] A detailed description of the thirty-seven *daftars* and three bundles of *cadjans* which were the raw material for this report is found in *MRP* (280: 79: 3174–200), No. 12 of 5 May 1846.

[2] *Elliot Report Précis*, 17 April 1846, *MRP* (281: 21: 8208–31), No. 40 of 6 December 1847.

however infer from these facts that the people of the district are naturally more prone to falsehood and dishonesty than those of other provinces. The fault is in the system under which they live.'[1] Whenever there was a great Zamindar ready to purchase the influence which a district officer might have with a Collector; whenever the pay of a district officer was low and his tenure and prospects for promotion precarious; whenever large balances were allowed to collect or large remissions were granted by the Government; whenever there was a frequent alternation between *amani* and *zamindari* administration; whenever changes in Collectors were frequent or the powers of Collectors (as in settled districts) were limited so as to leave them without adequate authority; whenever district and village officers were free to act with impunity because of the difficulty, under Regulation IX of 1822 and of 1802, of obtaining sufficient evidence; whenever from want of information and for lack of an accurate survey and assessment the Government was ignorant of the real resources of an area: then the situation was only too inviting for the perpetuation of old customs by which local forces would organize to undermine the authority of the State.

Eight reforms in the district administration were recommended by Elliot as being essential for the immediate restoration of central control: (1) A proper survey and a complete revision of the assessment under improved methods for conducting the *jamabandi* should be brought into effect. (2) A correct and complete register and description of all lands was necessary if the machinations of village leaders and district officers were to be checked. (3) Village institutions needed to be restored and the excessive power of the Karnams checked. Out of 882 villages in Guntur proper, only forty-six Headmen had been found variously answering to such titles as Head Ryots, Pedda Kapus, Pedda Naidus, Pedda Rajus, Pedda Reddis, or Peddathanadars. These remnants of the hereditary offices of Headmen, together with the Munsifs whom Elliot thought to be 'mere ciphers', were without much authority. All power seemed to be vested in the Karnams.[2] (4) The institution of *Grama Kharchu* (Village Expense Account) would either have to be abolished or strictly regulated. (5) All rent-free tenures (*inam* lands) would have to be examined and those with invalid titles

[1] *Elliot Report*, paras. 60–61, op. cit.
[2] *Elliot Report*, para. 82, op. cit.

resumed. (6) A new territorial redistribution of the villages without reference to the boundaries of zamindaris was imperative for the sake of efficiency. (7) Vernacular and English records needed to be arranged and controlled. The Daftarkhana of Guntur was in utter chaos, with no lists of entries, no drafts fair-copied in books, and 4,000 daftars of accounts unsorted. Papers taken from arranged bundles were simply tied up in cloths and thrown haphazardly into the record room.[1] (8) The strength of the district establishment needed to be increased, both in numbers of officers as well as in pay. Salaries of district officers should be put up to the level of those in regular ryotwari districts. It was unrealistic to expect a Collector and a Head Assistant not only to carry the overwhelming burden of current duties in such a terrible climate but to carry out the reforms and keep a severely watchful eye on district and village officers. Little would be gained by stretching the powers of the Collector to the breaking point. More European subordinates were required. Indeed, such subjects as *inams* and survey required special officers. Finally, and most important of all, Elliot was convinced that 'means should be adopted to secure . . . the continued services of the same officers for a length of time in the District'.[2] Never had Guntur flourished as it had under Oakes and Whish. Perhaps the suggestion of the Court of Directors for a higher salary to the Collector of Guntur should be heeded.

The Commissioner could see no alternative than that the zamindaris should be sold to the Government and the Zamindars granted a liberal living allowance. After an intensive study both of the history and of the present character of each family, he could see no probability that their habits of extravagance, improvidence, inefficiency, or corruption would change; nor could he see that they would be better able to cope with Karnams and village leaders than they had been before. No matter how indulgent the Government was, they would merely confuse indulgence for weakness and stupidity. Elliot could find no evidence that the abolition of the zamindaris would be unpopular. On the contrary, he found that responsible people wanted a system of administration which would protect them from oppression. Feelings of loyalty for the families of the Zamindars did not reach beyond their immediate households; moreoever, tried and faithful hereditary retainers and servants as were possessed by truly

[1] *Elliot Report*, para. 95, op. cit. [2] ibid. para. 96.

ancient families such as those in Ganjam were not to be found. Since the Zamindars had no claim to liberality, Elliot felt that a liberal allowance of eight per cent of what would have been their net profits would fully suffice in settling the whole question.[1]

The final words of the *Report* were devoted to commending the services of Appu Rao, the Huzur Sheristadar of Cuddapah. Though he had never met Appu Rao before that officer had joined him at Guntur, the Commissioner never regretted his choice. It was freely admitted that, but for the hard work, patience, and insight which this Maratha had exercised, the task of the Commission could not have been accomplished.

[1] *Elliot Report*, paras. 100–5, op. cit.

XV

THE REACTION OF HIGHER AUTHORITIES, 1846–1848

THE investigation of Guntur District marked a turning point in the district's administration and in the career of Walter Elliot. The information which he brought to light created enough alarm to jolt the ponderous wheels of State machinery out of their normal ruts. Over the decisions which followed there was little dissent. The operations of local leaders were subjected to searching scrutiny by the highest authorities. Local influence was numbered, weighed, and found wanting. Years were to pass before all of the effects of the investigation would be felt in Guntur. But still, the old ruts of inertia were broken and the wheels of administration started moving slowly along a different path.

When Stokes returned to Guntur late in 1845, he no longer found trouble in gaining a sympathetic hearing at Madras. The Cutcherry had been swept. Huzur and Ghaibatu personnel whom White had appointed now worked for him instead of against him. With Elliot and Goldingham sitting on the Board, immediate remedies had the full co-operation of the Board of Revenue.

Between May and December 1846 the initial steps were taken to put the district administration back upon a sound footing. The zamindaris were purchased by the Government for Rs. 5,000 each. Guntur proper was divided into twelve compact taluks (making a total of fourteen with Palnad). No village was more than two or three hours walk from its Taluk Cutcherry. It became possible for village officers to be assembled easily and for district officers to act quickly and thoroughly, thus lightening the work load by more than one-fourth. Village Munsifs (Headmen) were appointed in 640 of the most important villages and given pay and privileges sufficient to make their position a real counter-poise to that of the Karnams. A standardized set of forms and procedures in account-

ing was introduced which made deception much more difficult. Because of Elliot's pilot survey, the number of fixed-land-assessment (*makta*) villages was increased to 467; moreover, restrictions on the disposal of crops in *makta* villages were relaxed, with the result that revenue collections became more punctual 'than in any other former year on record'.[1] Survey accounts in the Palnad were revised in anticipation of a complete register of fields by the Naib Sheristadar, with the result that more concealed cultivation was uncovered and more *inams* measured. Thus, within two years, land revenue so recovered that it surpassed the permanent *peshkush* (zamindari tribute) by more than Rs. 10,000. But for a scandal in the Salt Department, revenue might have approached an all-time high.[2]

It is apparent that the administrative reforms which Stokes had proposed in 1843 became operative during 1846 and 1847. Of course problems remained. But at least the Collector was supported by the Board—pending decisions from higher authorities. Probably the most pressing question was how to recover enormous balances of revenue outstanding against villagers and zamindars, not to mention amounts which had been misappropriated by zamindars and district officers. Records of this period are filled with court cases showing how process after process of litigation was commenced in attempting to recover what for the most part had been squandered or hidden. Eventually, on 22 October 1849, Elliot, who by then was the Commissioner of the Northern Circars, suggested that the total amount of Rs. 74,14,378–14–5 be written off as a loss.[3]

Twenty months elapsed between the submission of the *Elliot Report* and the *Minute of Consultation* by the Government upon it. What is remarkable about this delay is the fact that during the interval much of the material content of the report was doled out gently in letters to the Court of Directors, usually after the necessary remedial actions related to each disclosure had been taken.[4]

[1] Hudleston Stokes [*Jamabandi Report* for Fasli 1256] to BOR Secretary, para. 39, 30 October 1847, *GDR* (159: 5405: 215–62).

[2] ibid. A detailed history of administrative recovery is contained in the fifty-eight paragraphs of this report.

[3] Elliot (Commissioner of the Northern Circars) to Collector of Guntur Zillah, 22 October 1849, *GDR* (5417: 75–77).

[4] *Board's Collection*, No. 116,221, Vol. 2272, Draft No. 48 of 1849, 'Affairs of Guntoor'. For Board of Control.

On 10 July 1845 Daniel White sent a voluminous report of eighty-one paragraphs to the Board of Revenue in which he outlined charges against the suspended Sheristadar and presented detailed information (given to him by Elliot) to support each charge. His case against Shashagiri Rao was summarized as follows:

> After a careful examination of all the evidence, I am myself perfectly satisfied that Sheshagerry Row has knowingly and willfully encouraged the Talook Authorities in the non-collection of the revenue . . . that the same has been done with a view to injure the character of Mr. Stokes. It is further fully established . . . that [he] has knowingly allowed rents of villages to be given below their real value. . . I further consider it to be fully proved that the Head Sheristadar has been guilty of holding lands. . . .[1]

White considered these offences 'so flagrant and heinous' that no words by the Government would be too severe. After pointing out that both Goldingham and Stokes had repeatedly pronounced on the unfitness of Shashagiri Rao, White concluded by saying that the Sheristadar was unworthy ever to be employed by the Government again.

The Board was so alarmed by the contents of this report that they felt that dismissal alone would be insufficient. Legal proceedings against the suspended Sheristadar under Regulation IX of 1822 were called for. Final orders upon the case were consequently withheld until the misconduct could be more fully investigated, evidence obtained, and a sentence passed.[2]

White replied that the case was not one which could easily be used for punishment. The risk of failure was too great. The Board then decided 'to eradicate the baneful influence of the Head Sheristadar' by instant dismissal.[3] The failure of White's health, leaving only Newill to cope with the whole administration, strengthened convictions that it would not be expedient to prosecute, though there was no doubt that 'systematic attempts to undermine the European Authority in Guntoor' had been made.[4]

Tweeddale felt that corrupt conduct from district officers

[1] White to BOR Secretary para. 77, 10 July 1845, *GDR* (58: 5402: 79–139).
[2] Extract of BOR *Proceedings*, 25 September 1845, *MRP* (280: 71: 6577–99), No. 6 of 2 December 1845.
[3] Extract of BOR *Proceedings*, para. 5, 27 October 1845, *MRP* (280: 71: 6605), No. 7 of 2 December 1845.
[4] ibid.

needed strong action. Shashagiri Rao especially should be punished because he was still exercising a subversive influence in the district.[1] To Dickinson, the case showed forcibly what could happen when the Board of Revenue failed to heed warnings from its Collectors. Had Goldingham and Stokes been heeded, such corruption and oppression might not have occurred. In his words: 'Until recently I know that this [failure to be heeded] was the subject of general complaint with Collectors and I have no reason to suppose that the system has since been improved. It calls loudly for the interference of Government.'[2] Since there was little hope for Shashagiri Rao's being successfully convicted and punished, Dickinson felt that both Nyapati Shashagiri Rao and his son-in-law, Ambarkhana Purushothum Rao (the Head Gumashta), should be permanently barred from ever entering government service again.[3] Henry Chamier was convinced that, when systematic corruption was found to be pervading a district establishment, a severe example should be made of any member of the higher classes of officers against whom charges of malversation could be proved. In his opinion, it was important that every effort be made to bring Shashagiri Rao to punishment before the Criminal (Sessions) Court.[4] Finally, the question of punishing these Desastha leaders was sent back to the Board for further consideration in hopes of obtaining a criminal conviction.[5]

On hearing of his dismissal, Shashagiri Rao hastened down to Madras to defend himself. Lewin could not believe that the dismissed Sheristadar was less than 'an honorable man' and wrote him a note: 'I shall not consider myself precluded from seeing you occasionally when you call at my house; but I cannot do anything which would lead to the opinion that I would or could support you beyond the strictest bounds of propriety.'[6]

An Appeal Petition was sent to the Government by Shashagiri Rao. A full investigation by two impartial officers was requested, 'not with any desire or ambition of getting back the situation of which [he had] been improperly deprived', but only to restore his

[1] Minute by Tweeddale, 17 October 1845, ibid. No. 8.
[2] Minute by Dickinson, 5 November 1845, ibid. No. 9.
[3] Minute by Henry Dickinson, 5 November 1845, op. cit.
[4] Minute by Henry Chamier, 8 November 1845, ibid. No. 10.
[5] *Minute of Consultation*, 28 November 1845, ibid. No. 11.
[6] Lewin to N. Shashagiri Rao, 14 December 1845, *MRP* (280: 72: 7351), Enclosure No. 11 in No. 75 of 23 December 1845.

'fair name'.[1] His thirty-five years of honest and zealous service, many of which were 'in the most important office which the State has opened to the Natives of India',[2] were supported by twelve letters of commendation from his former European superiors. Manganur Lakshminarsu Rao and Sabnavis Venkata Krishna Rao whose 'notorious intrigues' were still fomenting strife in Guntur were blamed for having put false accusations before European officers who were prejudiced against him. 'The intrigues of a few designing men', he declared, 'have been a matter of surprize not only to your Excellency's petitioner, but to every honest thinking man in [Guntur] and its neighbouring Zillahs.'[3] The enmity of Stokes, Newill, and Goldingham, the partiality of Elliot and White, and the failure of the Board of Revenue to act as a 'protector of its Native Servants, especially those in high office', were reasons why he should be given proper justice.[4] He claimed that six previous petitions 'slumbered in the records' of the Board. He pleaded that his prosecutor was now his judge—Goldingham was on the Board—in violation of a rule which was strictly observed in the judicial branch.

By May of 1846 it had become plain that further proceedings against the dismissed Head Sheristadar and Head Gumashta should be dropped.[5] Communications between Madras and London upon the subject, in which all the papers on the case (including the petitions of Shashagiri Rao) were sent to the Court of Directors, continued for two more years. There was, however, no disagreement over the guilt of the Desastha officers. The rulings of Government were confirmed. (*Final disposition* of the case was sent to Guntur on 1 June 1848.)[6]

In their *Minute of Consultation* of 6 December 1847 the Government dealt at length with the problems of Guntur as revealed in the *Elliot Report* of 17 April 1846. Opinions given may be divided roughly under three headings: namely, what

[1] Appeal Petition of N. Shashagiri Rao to Lord Tweeddale, 14 December 1845, *MRP* (280: 72: 7330–57), No. 75 of 23 December 1845.

[2] op. cit. para. 2.

[3] ibid. para. 3. [4] ibid. para. 5.

[5] Extract of BOR *Proceedings*, 28 May and *Minute of Consultation*, 27 June 1846, *MRP* (281: 1: 4050), Nos. 26–27 of 30 June 1846.

[6] *Madras Revenue Letters*, para. 11 of 7 March 1846 (No. 10), and paras. 7–8 of 27 September 1847. *Board's Collections*, No. 116,221 (vol. 2272, pp. 119, 451). *GDR* (5379: 124–5).

caused the distress, what was to be done with the zamindaris, and what should be done with Elliot's eight recommendations.

There was full agreement that maladministration lay at the bottom of all Guntur's trouble. The Permanent Settlement had never had a fairer trial than in Guntur. Although assessments had been moderate and payments light, family dissensions and litigations, amazing extravagance even during poor years, severe calamities such as famine, pestilence, flood, and storm, and, finally, a parasitic collusion of district officers with village leaders had dragged the district to depths of poverty such as had never been known before.[1] Clearly, the failure of the zamindari settlement was not, in the opinion of the Governor-in-Council, a failure of Government (though Goverment had originally made the settlement). But failure of *amani* (government) management was not so easy to slough off. There was regret that the efforts of Goldingham and Stokes to prevent pernicious subversions of authority had not been supported in Madras and that most of the delinquent district officers had escaped full penalties for their actions.[2]

After the experiment of using Zamindars as Amildars had failed and the zamindari *sanads* had been surrendered in order to facilitate a thorough reorganization of administration and improvement of economic resources, an arrangement with which the Zamindars had been forbidden to tamper once they were restored to their estates, nothing constructive had been accomplished. The disclosures of the Commissioner made it clear that the policy of the Government had been at variance with the purposes of the Zamindars from the outset and that no confidence could be placed in a future delegation of authority to the Zamindars. Subject to the confirmation of Home authorities, the zamindaris were to be bought, their public and private liabilities assumed, and provision for the families promised.[3]

Three alternatives confronted the Government in providing for the Zamindars. (1) The zamindaris might eventually be restored; (2) a *muttha* or several villages might be granted (in a *jagir*

[1] *Minute of Consultation*, para. 20, 6 December 1847, *MRP* (281: 21: 8231–70), No. 41 of 6 December 1842.

[2] ibid. paras. 13 and 17. Average annual misappropriations of the revenue were fixed at 8 per cent, which was proved, although few doubted but that the figures were really much higher.

[3] *Minute of Consultation*, paras. 2–8, 6 December 1847, ibid.

or an *inam*) to each family; and (3) money pensions might be granted in perpetuity. Elliot's report strongly opposed restoration and favoured a money allowance. The only rights which the Zamindars had possessed prior to those which the British Government had bestowed upon them were, in his opinion, rights to compensation for their administrative services. Since services were no longer performed, rights no longer existed. Elliot advocated that one lakh, 8 per cent of their tribute (*peshkush*), be given to the ex-zamindars as an annual pension in perpetuity. This allowance 'would place them in a position of great respectability, which would be appreciated by their countrymen, and in more easy and affluent circumstances'.[1] The Governor-in-Council adopted this suggestion, pending orders from the Court of Directors; but they cut the pensions down to what was already being drawn by the ex-Zamindars—a total of Rs. 34,800 per year.[2]

All of the eight remedies recommended by Elliot (see chapter XIV, p. 215) were supported by the Government. Among these remedies, those applying greater control to the villages were emphasized. A complete register of land, *inam* land in particular, had yet to be made. Caste privileges in revenue assessment (*wandra*) needed to be cut back to manageable limits. It was calculated that 1,100 Munsifs, 1,100 Karnams, and 1,500 Taliaris (Police Watchmen) were needed and that all of them should be paid only in money from district and taluk treasuries. The *grama kharchu* was to be abolished by proclamation and even the receiving of *batta* from other than the treasuries was to be made punishable. Many of these improvements depended, of course, upon the exact survey which was to be made. In the meanwhile, the Government commended the system of joint-village rents on the *makta* assessments which had been improved by Stokes.[3]

Finally, after endorsing all of the specific proposals which Elliot had made for the district organization, such as higher salaries for top district officers, a thorough renovation of the Daftarkhana, and an increased number of European staff (another Junior Assistant was allowed), the Government gave special attention to the measures which would be required for the economic development

[1] op. cit. para. 50. [2] ibid.

[3] ibid. para. 28. Gordon Mackenzie, *A Manual of Kistna District* (Madras, 1883), p. 355. *Note:* This mixture of the ryotwari and village systems in actual practice has been noted in chapter V to have been what really took place in the Palnad.

of the district. In this, irrigation was the main concern. An Assistant Civil Engineer was to give his whole time to the Engineering (*Maramat*) Department of Guntur. The construction of an *anicut* across the Krishna River was seen as the best way to escape unpredictable seasons and unreliable water supply. A constant water supply would bring economic stability and improvement.[1]

Another year elapsed before the Court of Directors dispatched its reply to the letter from Madras which had contained both the Elliot Report and the Government Minute theron. There is no doubt from the tone of this dispatch and from sarcastic comments pencilled in the margin of the copy which went to the Board of Control that the authorities in London were jolted by what they had learned.

Back-pedalling on its dispatch of 21 June 1842, in which the Court had stood for the Zamindars against the advice of the Madras Government, if not the inclinations of the Board of Control as well, the Court wrote: 'Had we been then aware of the true causes . . . we should not have hesitated to accede to your recommendation that the Estates should be brought to sale, purchased, and permanently retained by Government.'[2] All the measures which had been carried out regarding the abolition of the zamindaris were ratified. There was much more concern in London than in Madras, however, over the political implications of this action. In the words of the dispatch: 'It is important, in order that we may be relieved from any imputation of a breach of faith towards them, that the reasons which have led us to alter that intention should receive equal publicity.'[3] The Court pointed out that all the Collectors in the Northern Circars 'should explain to the Zemindars and other classes of the community the proceedings in Guntur'.[4] This was important, they thought, because

[1] op. cit. para. 46. Ricketts, *Report of the Commissioner for the Civil Salaries and Establishments* (Calcutta, 1858), pt. I, p. 284.

Note: The Collector was given an additional allowance of Rs. 2,000 a year as compensation for going to such a hardship station.

[2] COD *Despatch*, para. 8, 31 January (No. 1) 1849, *MD* (111: 455–530). *Marginal pencil note:* 'I would like to know whose fault it was that you did not know and ought not the Government to have known.' The BOC laid stress on Elliot's words: 'These instances of bad faith leave room for considering how far the [zamindars] are entitled to claim the terms of the surrender the conditions of which they have so wantonly broken.'

[3] ibid. para. 14.

[4] ibid.

of the apparent notoriety which had attended the surrendering of the *sanads* and the proposed ultimate restoration of the zamindaris.

The measures which were being taken to restore prosperity, protect the people, and ensure the future stability of revenue were dealt with next. Only with regard to the process by which *inam* tenures were to be investigated was there a sign of wavering. Elliot's recommendation, based on evidence that the bulk of *inams* were invalid, was that all *inams* should be summarily resumed and that claimants wishing to recover their *inams* should substantiate their titles or lose their privileged position. A pencil note in margin remarked: 'This is reversing the order of things. It is for the Government to prove these titles. The proposal shakes my confidence in Mr. Elliot's opinions and recommendations. It is a breach of faith.'[1] The Court also echoed the view which had now been repeated and repeated by authorities on every level for more than six years, namely, that the survey and assessment of the district should be accomplished as quickly as possible.[2] Twenty more years were to pass, however, before this purpose was finally brought to fruition.

Finally, the Court of Directors touched upon a subject which was 'most painful' to them. Sufficient attention had not been paid to maladministration for a long time. This was partly due to the frequent changing of Collectors; nevertheless, it seemed unbelievable that 'not one [case of misconduct] should have forced itself on the notice of any of the persons who successively filled that office, so far at least as to excite his suspicions that the depressed state of the district and the defalcation of the revenue arose from causes more deeply seated . . . than those which had been assigned'.[3] The Court felt that a general conspiracy was conclusively established. While Elliot felt that the organized secrecy of the conspiracy was some excuse for the ignorance of the Collector, the Court saw in it a sign of feebleness and inefficiency. Disputes between Collectors and the Board of Revenue over the appointment of Sheristadars were looked upon as showing a lack of vigilance in Madras. Shock was expressed that district officers should have outdone zamindars in mischief even to the extent of

[1] op. cit. para. 19. *Note:* The *inams* were not summarily resumed, nor was an *inam* enquiry begun until 1854; but there is no mention of this pencil note in dispatches. [2] ibid. para. 16. [3] ibid. para. 25.

'founding charitable institutions with the fruits of their plunder'.[1] But when the Court hoped that Elliot's disclosures might have 'a salutary effect', a Member of the Board of Control pencilled: 'I do think that such a notice of such gross misconduct is a most inadequate expression of the disapprobation of the Court.'[2] Considering that losses amounted to nearly 80 lakhs, the Court felt that the Madras Government had not registered surprise and indignation in proportion to the magnitude of the offences. They wrote: 'No effort at all commensurate with the greatness of the abuses which have brought about such a lamentable state of things or with the importance of the interests which they have so deeply injured has been made to correct them. The survey, registration, and reassessment of the District have yet to be begun.'[3] Last of all, the long delay between the submission of the *Elliot Report* and the date of its consideration by the Government (April 1846 to December 1847) was noted with 'extreme displeasure'.[4]

The situation in Guntur revealed by Walter Elliot so alarmed the authorities in London that they took a second look at the condition of the Northern Circars as a whole. While the condition of the other *Zillah Circars* did not seem bad enough to demand any immediate investigation, it did seem bad.[5] Almost nothing had been done to implement the recommendations, similar to Elliot's, made by Sir Henry Montgomery in Rajahmundry. It was decided that, in order 'to secure a more vigorous and energetic action and a closer and more searching supervision',[6]

[1] op. cit. para. 27. *Marginal note:* 'Surely all this takes away from our strong condemnation of the Zamindars.'

[2] ibid. para. 28.

[3] ibid.

[4] ibid. *Marginal note:* 'This is unpardonable neglect on the part of Government. Certainly the Government is greatly to blame.' *Note:* By the time that this dispatch was sent, the Government was almost entirely changed. Tweeddale was already Home; Chamier had retired; and Dickinson was soon to retire.

[5] ibid. paras. 29–31. *Note:* Arrears in the Northern Circars:

Circars	Arrears Due—1839	Arrears Due—1846
Guntur	Rs. 43,76,332	Rs. 74,37,106
Rajahmundry	12,13,863	14,25,605
Masulipatam	17,07,059	28,08,855
Vizagapatam	3,07,441	4,04,325
Ganjam	2,69,308	9,00,058

[6] ibid. para. 32.

the Northern Circars had better be placed under one of the Members of the Board of Revenue. The Commissioner of the Northern Circars was to receive a special deputation allowance in addition to his present salary of Rs. 1,000 per month. The Government of India was to be ordered to make a special legislative enactment giving the Commissioner sufficient powers to enforce his authority. 'The singular ability displayed by Mr. Walter Elliot . . . [rendered] it desirable that he should be employed in a manner for which he [had] shown himself to be so peculiarly fitted.'[1]

The Government of Madras, which was now headed by Sir Henry Pottinger, wasted no time in following the Court's suggestions. A copy of the dispatch was sent to each district of the Northern Circars. Pending legislative enactment from the Government of India, charge of the Northern Circars was committed to Elliot (under Section XXIII, Regulation I of 1803). Pending an exact definition of power as Commissioner, Elliot was given most of the responsibilities of the Board of Revenue, with the exception of the Public Works (*Maramat*) Department. This meant that the burden of work for the Board of Revenue was lightened by more than one-fourth.[2]

The same letter which informed the Home authorities of these changes, conveyed news of rapid recovery in Guntur District and of the restoration of control within its administration. The latest *Jamabandi Report* (for Fasli 1257) from Stokes showed that population, resources and revenues had almost reached the level which had existed before the great famine.[3]

The general censure which had been levelled at the Collectors of Guntur in the Court's dispatch of 31 January 1849 brought an immediate response from John Goldingham who, having advocated all along the measures which were only now being put into effect, could not allow his reputation to be clouded. Long passages from his report to Charles Cotton (of 13 December 1839) were quoted to show that he had been strongly opposed to the maladministration of the Zamindars and that he had proposed the necessary remedies. In bringing this to the attention of the Court, the Madras Government pointed out that, although unwarranted stress might have been placed upon the effects of calamitous

[1] op. cit. para. 33.
[2] GOM to COD, 22 May, No. 27 of 1849, *MRL* (27: 357–69).
[3] ibid. paras. 12–13.

seasons, the maladministration of the Zamindars had been mentioned, and the resumption of their estates strongly advocated in their letter of 16 April 1841.[1]

The Court of Directors showed, in their dispatch of 18 June 1850, their satisfaction with the rapid recovery of the district and with the steps which had been taken to put a Commissioner in control of the Northern Circars. Goldingham who by now was permanent Third Member of the Board of Revenue, was completely exonerated of any blame for the depression and maladministration of Guntur.[2]

The career of Walter Elliot ended as remarkably as it had begun. He remained in charge of the Northern Circars until 16 August 1854, when he was appointed to succeed Sir T. V. Stonehouse as a Member of Council. During the Mutiny, when the health of Lord Harris broke, Elliot became Provisional Governor. (His cousin, Lord Elphinstone, was then Governor of Bombay.) He read the Royal Proclamation which announced that authority over India had passed from the Company to the Crown. He resigned in Madras on 27 December 1859, was knighted for his services six years later, and devoted many of his remaining years to the pursuit of oriental studies, a pastime which had already brought him much distinction.[3]

[1] GOM to COD, 22 May, No. 27 of 1849, *MRL* (27: 357–69) para. 14. ibid. 16 April 1841.

[2] COD *Despatch*, paras. 1–6, 18 June, No. 2 of 1850: *MRD* (16: 273–81).

[3] Robert Sewell, *Sir Walter Elliot of Wolfelee* (Edinburgh, 1896), pp. 53–60.

XVI

CONCLUSION AND EPILOGUE

BETWEEN 1788 and 1848, particularly between 1837 and 1845, a silent combination of local forces in Guntur District benefited at the expense of the State. For lack of accurate information from villages and lack of support from Madras, British officers lost control of their subordinates and their authority was weakened. Indian district officers, notably Maratha Brahmans under the leadership of the Sheristadar, supplanted the Zamindars. Acting in the name of the Government, these officers became free from supervision and acquired the perquisites and dignities of power. The aura of divinity, the borrowed glow of the *Huzur*, so clung to them that they could walk like giants. A daughter's marriage or the erection of a shrine by one of these officers would bring special contributions (propitiations) from the villages. But the villages often gained the better part of bargains with district officers. Village money spread a corrupting influence into ever higher levels of the hierarchy, and the administration became caught in the webs of village influence. As in the story of Gulliver, the strength of the district administration was pegged to the earth by countless tiny threads, a captive of Lilliputian villages. Executive control over Guntur would not have faltered nor would high policies have suffered paralysis had not local influences utilized remarkable sources of strength and had not central authority been weak and ineffectual. In short, for a number of years, local influence undermined central authority and thwarted Company policy.

This study has been concerned mainly with describing and tracing historically the counter-operations and mutual antagonisms of two political, administrative principles or tendencies which have operated in India, the one localizing and the other centralizing in character. They are hardly compatible. A gulf is fixed between the abased and the exalted, between fierce

energy and confident repose, between subversive action and flamboyant display, between silent influence and noisy authority, as between the dust and the sky. Within the narrow compass of a single district and within a limited span of time, we have attempted to show how these two principles countered each other.

The extreme contrast and disparity between these two principles may be typified symbolically by contrasting two well-known Indian phenomena. The white ant is a tiny creature of tremendous energy and silence which, by combining its efforts with countless other tiny brothers, can make a hollow shell or empty crust out of the stoutest wooden structure—as many a person has discovered to his sorrow upon sitting in a chair long left in some neglected *dak* (traveller's) bungalow. The ant typifies what happens when energetic and silent local leadership, in combination, makes a hollow mockery out of the stoutest administrative structure. The white umbrella (with gold and scarlet trimming), a proud and lofty structure, is the traditional Indian symbol of Royal authority. An invention of ingenuity, it shades and shields from the elements those who hold it. It typifies the power and glory of the Company, the diligence and care with which it was constructed, the system by which it was sustained, and the protection it gave to all who dwelt within its shadow.

In other words, at each level of power, local interests sought to resist interference and non-local interests sought to interfere in the district. Conservative forces within the district, arising out of the villages, attempted to thwart what they considered to be radical and predatory forces from outside. Centralizing agents were bound to try to bring about compliance from local leaders. Localizing energies were bound to try to corrupt and undermine 'foreign' agencies.

The arena in which these forces collided was the intermediate zone. The clash occurred at the levels between the villages and the *Huzur*, within the institutions of district administration, and it revolved around the go-betweens. Whether or not the district officers and subordinate servants located between the *Huzur* and the villages could be corrupted or kept loyal was a matter of importance to both sides.

Localizing and centralizing forces were pitted against each other in the actual elements of administration, in the structure and

functions of government. Their struggle left its marks in organization and reorganization, in red-tape and black-ink, in channels of communication and accessibility, in changing staff and personnel, and in countless rules and regulations which were set up to control this machinery. The side which most thoroughly and effectively controlled the machinery of government within the district saw its own interest advanced. It seems quite clear that from the departure of John Whish in 1831 to the coming of Walter Elliot in 1845, this side was not the Government of Madras.

'A remarkable feature of local influences in Guntur', one observer has stated, 'is the ability seemingly to submit to high authority while at the same time achieving their own ends.'[1] This statement seems to sum up the paradox of acceptance and resistance coming from local elite groups which provided a baffling dilemma for Madras authorities.

The elite groups of the district were those light *varnas* or castes who dominated the high positions in the local hierarchy. Whether or not they struggled among themselves over the spoils, the high castes (usually Brahmans alone or Brahmans in coalition with high Sudras) monopolized power in the villages and in the district administration. For the twice-born, there was no definite sense of right and wrong, no beginning or ending, no complete or incomplete apart from their own joint-families and castes. Humanity ended there and suspicion and hostility began there. Whatever public spirit, whatever community of values, interests, and motivations, whatever sense of nation, and whatever cohesive feelings of loyalty and responsibility existed, these revolved around the family and the caste. While this horizontal stratification of castes and vertical fragmentation of families into socially and ethically isolated compartments was common to the whole social order, it was the elite groups at each level who benefited. The elite groups wielded the religious, social and economic sanctions by which they maintained the *status quo*. These groups were the source of local influence.

Yet they were not all of one specie or of one feeling. Some were

[1] This statement was made to the author by Dr. A. T. Fishman, a member of the faculty of Andhra Christian College, Guntur, who was drawing upon more than forty years of experience as a missionary, teacher and scholar in Telugu country. *Field Notes*, 5 November 1959. See A. T. Fishman, *Culture Change and the Underprivileged* (Madras, 1941).

more local and earthbound. Others were lodged up in the supporting pillar and struts of the umbrella. The Niyogi Brahmans and other allied groups down on the ground were not as committed to a particular umbrella as Desastha (Maratha Brahmans) and other groups which benefited most and risked losing most if the structure collapsed. Niyogi Karnams had seen one régime succeed another with relative indifference since their positions in the villages were not much altered. Desasthas had also managed to keep their strength as district officers during more than one régime; but they stood to gain more by maintaining stability and peace.

Perhaps no statement so aptly fits the relationship of the higher and the lower groups, of one elite caste to another elite caste, and indeed of local to central institutions, than the quotation that Percival Spear has taken from Augustine's description of society without the Church (in describing social organization in North India): 'The State is a great robber band; for robber bands, what are they but little states?'[1] The Desasthas must be seen in this light as one tribe of robbers dealing with other tribes. Their crowning achievement during our period was to unite under the leadership of Shashagiri Rao with the village leaders against Hudleston Stokes. By so doing they carved out, secretly and silently, a state within a state. But since they possessed no sentimental attachment to the general good or to the social and economic welfare of the less fortunate communities, who were after all to be viewed as intrinsically inferior, and since their opportunity for aggrandizement might slip at any moment, local leaders were more oppressive both in design and in practice than the State. They took what they could while the taking was good; and the district suffered.

It is the dependence of the European rulers upon the traditional elite groups of the locality and upon the traditional institutions and customs for acquiring the revenue that is significant. Just as the country was conquered and held largely by an Indian army led by European officers, so the country was administered by an Indian bureaucracy—sometimes only nominally under the control of European officers. Of this bureaucracy James Dykes wrote:

> It is perhaps the wonder of the world, this Indian empire. Whilst the native soldiery give their heart's blood on the battlefield . . . and dying bless the power [over them], that same devotion to a strange race sitting

[1] T. G. P. Spear, *Twilight of the Mughuls* (Cambridge, 1951), p. 126.

in the seat of the rulers is equally shown by men of the priesthood, the hierarchy of Hindostan. And the secular members of that body which has ruled the political destinies of the country since the days of Menu, no matter who held the sword, whether Mussulman, Mogul, Hindoo, or Mahratta, have from our first assumption of power ever striven to their utmost to fill the coffers of the State.[1]

While these Brahmans were at times a little short-sighted, thinking more of the day's revenue than of the morrow's resources, thousands of remarkably able Desasthas in South India could point to generations of government service.

The corruption of authority in Guntur (and in other districts) must not blind us to the fact that the Maratha Brahmans were go-betweens. They were neither wholly local nor wholly central in their loyalties. Indeed, they apparently followed their own best interests with consistency.

The Mahratta Brahmins who served Tippoo and administered the affairs of all eastern princes, are equally eager to swell the revenue of the English Government. A Brahmin never considers himself of any nation; he is 'twice-born' and by virtue of this . . . is bound by no such ties. If asked what countryman he is, the reply invariably will be . . . that in his family such a language is used. He and his fathers . . . have had nothing to do with one nation more than another. And whoever may rule India, he fully believes that all financial affairs will be administered as hitherto . . . [in the south] through those 'twice-born' that speak the Mahratta language.[2]

As go-betweens, the Desasthas were efficient, secretive, and demanding. They made sure of as much revenue as could possibly be milked from the villages. By using the Marathi language as their medium of exchange for almost all information, they were able to keep the right hand from fully knowing what the left hand was doing. By their enormously bulky and complex accounting (Bourdillon wrote that taluk and district accounts contained 1,200 columns of figures), and by their endless duplication of Marathi and English forms, they were able to smother their European superiors with facts and to cloud essential truths.[3] Finally, if their

[1] J. B. W. Dykes, *Salem, an Indian Collectorate* (Madras, 1853), p. 324.
[2] ibid. p. 323.
[3] ibid. John Norton, *Letter to Robert Lowe on the Condition and Requirements of the Madras Presidency* (Madras, 1854), p. 136. A verbatim report by James Bourdillon, Collector of North Arcot, is quoted.

pay were not such as would befit their role as go-betweens, they readily took advantage of what means they possessed for enriching themselves. This type of corruption, however, was not remarkable; for few Western countries are immune from corruption in local government even today.

The tendency of Desastha Brahmans in charge of a Huzur Cutcherry to combine in a subversive manner was not confined to Guntur but was general throughout South India. Ricketts wrote: '. . . in every district, in a greater or less degree, the whole body of public servants form a combination, bound together by strong ties of interests (not only out of hope of gain but out of fear of injury) and often of family or caste connexion, to maintain abuses.'[1] The Naib Sheristadar in Nellore had fifty-six relatives in key offices within that district administration. Out of 388 officers in the district establishment of Bellary District, 235 were Brahmans and most of them were Desasthas.[2] When Walter Elliot went to Masulipatam in 1849 as Commissioner to the Northern Circars, where Richard Porter had been Collector since 1842, he found over 4,000 unanswered letters in the Huzur and the administration entirely in the hands of Sundaragiri Ramanuja Rao, the Huzur Sheristadar. In his fall from power, Ramanuja Rao assured the ruin of the Collector and the Army Surgeon; but of 116 officers tried, almost every one was acquitted and escaped punishment.[3] Ricketts reckoned the average annual siphoning of revenue into the pockets of district officers at a minimum of 40 lakhs of rupees a year for the whole Presidency.[4]

The problem of combinations of Indian officers subverting Company authority was not confined to civil administration. Such combinations also existed within the Madras Army. Governor Tweeddale, whose professional interest and skill were primarily those of a soldier, wrote: 'The Madras Army has been in a state of covert mutiny during the last eight years (1837–45). We have had all degrees of Mutiny. Every punishment has proved a failure for one simple reason: *that the Ringleaders have received no punishment*. They have dexterously escaped while the dupes of their

[1] Ricketts, *Report of the Commissioner for the Revision of Civil Salaries and Establishments* (Calcutta, 1858), part I, p. 343.

[2] *Report of the Commission for the Investigation of Alleged Cases of Torture in the Madras Presidency* (Madras, 1855), p. 38.

[3] Gordon Mackenzie, *A Manual of the Kistna District* (Madras, 1883), p. 352.

[4] Ricketts, op. cit. pt. I, p. 336.

intrigues have suffered.'[1] In discussing the problem with the Duke of Richmond, Tweeddale pointed to the non-commissioned officers (Jamadars and Subadars, &c.) as being the heart of the problem and blamed the incompetence of European officers for permitting such feelings of unrest to develop.

Our knowledge of the strength of the Indian administrative class which supported the Company Raj in South India allows another cautious suggestion—that the Maratha Brahmans may have had something to do with the Madras Presidency remaining steadfast during the Mutiny. The very strength of their hold and the profits which they derived therefrom strengthens the notion that they had more to lose than to gain by bringing about a collapse of the umbrella.[2]

The first half of the nineteenth century saw the faint beginnings within the Presidency of the introduction of the English language and education, the setting up of enterprising schemes in transportation, communication, credit and banking, irrigation, famine relief, and public health, the entrance of progressive technology and equipment, the rise of a market economy, the application of English legal procedures in courts, and the infusion of new practices and ideals of administration into government. All of these changes were brought into play by the agents of central authority in dealing with the traditions and customs and leadership of the old order. The collision between the new world and the old took place at the district level.

These new elements do not alter the fact, however, that central authority in Madras was very Indian in its character. By this we do not mean that government was swift, terrible, personal, or direct; for indeed it was often very slow, seemingly weak, impersonal and evasive. We mean that the structure of authority at the Presidency was surfeited with entrenched and time-serving bureaucracy. Jobbing and intrigue, multiplication of

[1] Lord Tweeddale to the Duke of Richmond (5th), 13 March 1845, *Goodwood Archives* (Chichester: County Record Office). *Note:* The Governor did not think that the other Presidencies should gloat over the embarrassments of the Madras Army. He had heard that infantry regiments at Meerut were also in a state of mutiny.

[2] Of course, the very fact that the Madras Army had its troubles, made the European officers more alert to signs of trouble. Also, as noted earlier, Salar Jung of Hyderabad served as a barrier between Madras and the affected areas to the north.

offices so that drones would do the least harm, and paralysing frustration and caution were all too apparent in Madras. Many of those who had spent thirty years in the *mufassal*, even those who had not been up-country for so long, showed the marks of a lifetime in India. Having arrived as youths, unmarried, impressionable, and full of energy, they had aged in the Indian sun. Those who survived the climate were not immune to Indian ways. Just as Walter Elliot found himself thriving in the extreme heat of the Guntur plain and sickening with the cool weather (as so many Indians do), so reforming zeal and youthful ambitions thinned in the veins of many so that they became hardened and cynical.[1]

In short, the entrenched bureaucracy of Madras became in many respects similar to the entrenched bureaucracy in the district. The Chief Secretary became much like the Huzur Sheristadar in his position, his functions, and his power. Other Secretaries became like Naibs and Diwans and Dubashis. The various Boards, which would have functioned much more efficiently if they had been reconstituted as single executive Commissionerships, were filled with those who did not want to rock the boat and who wanted to finish off their few remaining years before retirement without undue disturbance. A deep conservatism bordering upon contrariness and reaction seems to have characterized the mood of this bureaucracy. Their deliberations were prolonged, infinitely slow, and couched with all sorts of protective minutes, provisions, and escape clauses. As a result, Board Members became irritated with the daring proposals of upstarts in the districts whom they hardly knew, while their sympathies became identified with those Indian servants whom they had known during their *mufassal* days and whom they were sure fully deserved the fruits of long service.

Viewed from below, from a station in the *mufassal*, a pattern of action and reaction, of checks and balances, and of progressive and conservative behaviour emerges. When applied to the problems of Guntur, an identification of interests seems apparent. A line of progressive interest connects the District Collector, the Governor-in-Council, and the Board of Control with the poor, voiceless

[1] John Norton wryly remarked that 'promotion should depend more on merit and less on senility', that the drones were 'pitchforked' into the judiciary ('Refuge for the Destitute'), and that if a man hung a witness instead of a prisoner by mistake he could still be made Post-Master General, op. cit. p. 322.

masses of India. A line of conservative identification from agencies which were constitutionally subordinate at each level to the authority of the first line (i.e. in London, in Madras, and in Guntur) seems to link local influences (i.e. the Zamindars and the Desasthas), the Board of Revenue, and the Court of Directors. This produced a leap-frog effect in which each level in the chain of command was in opposition to the levels immediately above and below it.

Thus the Board of Control had a voice in the selection of a Madras Governor; but the Court of Directors selected the Council in Madras with little direction from above, though the Governor's influence was felt, especially in appointing members to the Madras Boards and the Secretariat. At a lower level, the Governor selected the District Collector; but the Board of Revenue had a final voice in the selection of the key Indian district officers. There is much evidence that this dual alignment, with opposing views interspersed at successive rungs of the administrative ladder, produced a great deal of private or secret bypassing of authority. It is not, then, altogether strange—if this argument is followed—that Madras should have been notorious for its intrigue and for paralysis of policy.

It becomes apparent that the umbrella of Madras authority was not without its structural and functional weaknesses. Since the administrative decisions of the Board of Revenue were rarely between a clearly right and wrong or an obviously wise and foolish alternative, their language was often equivocating and uncertain. Worse, by coming down softly on one side of an argument after months of delay, they would simply pass the burden of deciding to someone else. When a decision finally arrived back from London, years after its initiation, the problem was often so altered or so advanced as to render the decision useless. A policy then only needed to meet some normal bureaucratic resistance to suffer its death-blow.

The revenue policy for Guntur failed. Assuming that the primary object of revenue policy is the prompt and regular realization of revenue and that the secondary object is the promotion of prosperity and the improvement of resources which yield revenue, neither of these objects was achieved during the period under examination.

Two courses were followed in attempting to gain these objects.

First, sweeping and unsupervised authority was delegated to the local leaders who were the direct heritors of such authority granted by pre-Company régimes. This policy was proving to be mistaken before its final authorization returned from London. The Zamindars enjoyed the privileges of their position without its responsibilities. They neglected to pay the revenue and attempted to oppress those who produced it. Instead of long-range development of their resources, they preferred to squander what thay had with reckless abandon. Erecting for themselves little umbrellas, they were soon consumed by the white ants within their own organizations and left in ruins. The Government's policy failed by misjudging the strength and ability of these local leaders, by leaving them too much to the tender mercies of the white ants, and by taking no steps to avert their ultimate ruin. How much, or whether at all, the Government could have shored up the position of these Zamindars is a debatable question.

Second, the policy of acquiring the revenue directly from its source of production also failed. Not all the reasons for this failure are clear and simple; but some are. The basic and underlying reason for failure was that the Government lost contact with its Indian officers in the district, and became ignorant of what was really going on. When a Collector finally stayed long enough in the district to learn, his warnings went unheeded. By failing to support their Collector, a person whose ultimate objects were the same as those of his superiors though his methods may not have been the same, the Board of Revenue ignored the best warning signal it could have had. The fact that a devastating famine had recently occurred there, together with a natural sympathy for the local leaders, deluded the Board of Revenue into thinking that they could justifiably put their trust in the old and experienced Desasthas of Guntur. Presumably out of their own knowledge, the Revenue Board Members must have had reasonable grounds for making the assumptions which they did.

It is clear that without the good services of countless members of Indian officers, of Desasthas in particular, the Company could not easily or successfully have administered the country. The ability to garrison troops in the country was not enough to inspire genuine respect and loyalty from local leaders or to keep intricate government machinery running smoothly. It was necessary for the British to provide the necessary inducements for procuring

the essential manpower, skills, and equipment for administering the country. Some degree of co-operation had to be won and some degree of confidence inspired from local leadership, which a simple threat of naked violence could not have achieved. The weaknesses of Desastha officers had to be balanced by their undeniable assets. Indeed, just as surely as Shashagiri Rao brought chaos and corruption to the administrations of Goldingham and Stokes, so also did Appa Rao's remarkable assistance make possible the success of the Elliot investigation. While one Maratha Brahman short-sightedly ended his career by organizing the white ants, another perhaps more wisely shored up the white umbrella.

In both policies, the failure of the authorities to decide wisely was not a failure intrinsic to one system of administration over another. Rather it was a failure in judging men. The choice was not simply between one class or caste of subordinates and another. The real choice rested in the selection of the right individuals. Men, not simply methods, lay at the heart of the matter. The method of choosing and trusting men was defective and authorities failed to trust the right persons. To plead that the right persons could not be found was not excuse enough. By failing to place proper persons in positions of power the authorities courted disaster.

Some suggestion as to why authority was not delegated to the right persons may be made. Not enough confidence was placed in the man on the spot and too much confidence was placed in the machinery. As John Norton, seeing the evils of over-centralization, put it: 'Men should be put more on the qui vive, by being freed from the casting-net of centralization . . . which has been gradually closing around them, until the up-country Collector dare hardly shave without a circular order authorizing him in the *Gazette*.'[1] Collectors were not allowed enough freedom. Had they been given more power of discretion to exercise their own judgement and their own ability, they would have had a greater interest in the success of their work. Had they been responsible for more of the decisions, particularly in the selection and removal of their Indian subordinates, at least some degree of teamwork would have been achieved in district administration. Instead, the Board of Revenue trusted to its endless paper-work and its own judgement

[1] John Norton, *A Letter to Robert Lowe on the Condition and Requirements of the Madras Presidency* (Madras, 1854), p. 319.

while the personal impressions of their man-on-the-spot were largely wasted.

The commonly held notion of the British District Officer as an all-wise, all-knowing, ever-efficient philosopher-king with a thorough grasp on the reins of power in his district is open to serious doubt. K. N. V. Sastri recently described the personal rule by which District Collectors captured the hearts and heads of their people, rendered government popular by their benevolence, and enhanced the dignity of their office. He wrote (in 1957): '. . . the people of the 19th century believed that everything good in every department of government was the fruit of the Collector's hard work and under his co-ordination and supervision, with the co-operation of all departments, . . . nothing was impossible under the sun, including the proverbial streams of milk and honey.'[1] Judged according to what happened in Guntur between the great famine of 1833 and the investigation of 1845, the Collector appears more as a dangling and stumbling puppet tied to strings which were held in Madras. As a result his actions became as rigid and as circumscribed as those of the Board of Revenue; moreover, he was deprived of that degree of flexibility which was needed in dealing with very astute and sophisticated struggles for power. The very rapid turn-over of Collectors in Guntur prior to the coming of Lord Elphinstone further weakened the role of the Huzur. Perhaps Thomas Oakes and John Whish may be described as masterful and godlike *huzurs* and doubtless Stokes and Newill, not to mention some of their successors, fulfilled this historic image. But the idea that there was an abiding divinity watching over the district pales in the light of events during our period.

Ironically, much of the position and prestige, which was nominally the Collector's, in reality fell to the Huzur Sheristadar. A definite and observable continuity of power in the hands of this officer and of the inner elite which he represented can be seen. As much as they fettered the Collector, the Madras authorities freed the Huzur Sheristadar. While Collectors came and went, the Huzur Sheristadar remained. He became the all-wise, all-knowing, ever-efficient prime-minister of the district. His words were taken with respect in Madras while those of the Collector were not. Time and time again, almost without

[1] K. N. V. Sastri, *Principles of District Administration in India* (Delhi, 1957), p. 18.

exception, his Naib and his Amins were upheld and restored to their positions by the Board of Revenue. His authority over the district was personal, direct, and crucial (even if often hidden). Even when he or one of his people were found guilty of misbehaviour, punishment was extraordinarily light or it was waived altogether.

Two features of Company rule may be seen as factors which brightened the rather dark picture of district administration given in this study. First, there was a growing awareness and concern over the problems of maladministration, an evident tide of good intentions, even on the part of incompetent European officers, towards Indian people in general, and a self-critical, self-corrective, and analytic faculty imbedded in the fabric of the 'white umbrella'.[1] Second, British resources and persistence had a relentless, almost machine-like quality so that, while the rulers were very slow in correcting the problems which came to their attention, they were ultimately able to devise very thorough and lasting solutions.

The ability of local leaders to blunt revenue policy was due primarily to the skill with which they joined together in combinations and, thereby, to the control which they obtained over information (or intelligence). By holding back or fabricating vital information, they were able to keep the rulers in ignorance or what is perhaps worse, in partial ignorance. It is for this reason that the ryotwari system in operation was a different creature from that which was formulated in the minds of policy-makers in Madras and London.[2]

As soon as that most indispensable ingredient, information, became available and accurate, it was possible for problems to be ground into dust and for solutions to be moulded in their place. The paralysis of Company policy in Guntur was finally broken by the timely sending of Walter Elliot to find out the reasons for the drying up of revenue. The information which he uncovered made possible certain counter-measures. His most important disclosure was the degree of ignorance which had existed regarding the district's administration. It was clear, for example, that little was

[1] A thread of sympathy for the lot of the poor ryots runs through the writings of Oakes, Whish, Goldingham, Stokes, Newill, Elliot, and many others. Interest and concern for leaders, such as the Desasthas, is also evident.

[2] J. D. Bourdillon, *Remarks of the Ryotwar System of Land Revenue as it exists in the Presidency of Madras* (Madras, 1853).

known of the true resources of the district, that there had never been an accurate survey, that virtually nothing was known about *inam* lands, and that the making, arranging, and preserving of records had not been done properly.

During the next twenty years, a series of decisions was made which completely altered the nature of district administration and of the personnel within it. Village Munsifs became strong both in their power and prestige while the position of Village Karnams waned. The Record Office in Guntur was completely reorganized and put upon a sound footing. Marathi accounts were abolished. A painstaking enquiry into *inam* lands was held. A fixed and scientific survey and field assessment was introduced (in 1868) at greatly reduced rates; and the annual settlement gave way to the periodic reassessment. The great *anicut* across the Krishna River was completed and a network of canals turned the delta into a rich green carpet. English schools were established and the first Western educated candidates for district service were put forward. In short, between 1850 and 1870, a revolution in district administration occurred.[1]

Certain steps were taken which finally broke the hold of the Desasthas upon district administration. It will be recalled that since 1826 there had been a ruling against a district officer's holding land in the same district in which he worked. In 1859, another ruling was made whereby no two members of the same family could be employed within the same district; moreover, no two members of the same caste could hold the top positions in an administrative office or department. Specifically, if a Maratha Brahman was the Huzur Sheristadar, then the Naib Sheristadar could not be a Desastha and vice versa. The same year, examinations for entrance and for promotion into specialized branches of the administration were introduced which made it possible for any individual, of no matter what social background, to enter district service. Finally, a year later, the removal of the bar prohibiting Indians from entering the covenanted branch of the Indian Civil Service made it possible for ambitious Desasthas to climb higher and higher.[2]

[1] A summary of these developments are found in G. Mackenzie, *A Manual of the Kistna District* (Madras, 1883), See W. Wilson, *Guntur Settlement Report of September 10, 1868* (Madras, G. O., 14 May 1872, No. 798F). Also, *Kistna District Census Report* (Madras, 1871).

[2] T. G. K. Pillay, *The Revenue Compendium of Madras Presidency*, I (Madras, 1873), pp. 120–3.

These changes in rules seem to have had a revolutionary effect upon the society of the district. The breaking of the Desastha monopoly in the Huzur and their subsequent diffusion into the higher levels of administrative service left the way open for the Niyogis. Since the Niyogis and other Brahmans were losing some of their strength in the villages to Non-Brahman Munsifs and since the barriers against their rising higher were being removed, it is natural that they became district officers; moreover, after acquiring English education, it was possible for them to follow the Desasthas into the higher levels of government. Following the Niyogis came the Vaidikis (priestly Brahmans), who were the other numerically strong Brahman caste in the district. Finally, about 1930, communal representation according to a selection roster based on fixed proportions was applied to district administration.[1] This rule caused the number of Brahmans in district service to drop from 67·32 per cent in 1922 to 28·74 per cent in 1958. But the number of Brahmans in the Tahsildari cadre is still strong (in 1960 there were six Brahman Tahsildars out of a possible ten places).[2] Yet, despite all these changes, there is little doubt that many of the same tensions between local influence and central authority continue to persist.

[1] *The Manual of Revenue Subordinate Service: 1931* (Madras, Government Press, 1947), para. 6.

[2] *District Establishment Lists* (Guntur, District Press, for 1922, 1930, 1939, and 1959).

APPENDIX I

DISTRICT ESTABLISHMENT OF GUNTUR

I. THE HUZUR CUTCHERRY

A. *The Secretariat (Sheristakhana)*

	Monthly Scale
1. Sherista Department (Native Accounts)	
(1) Huzur Sheristadar	Rs. 210–700
(2) Naib Sheristadar	120–175
(3) Assistant Sheristadar	100–120
(4) Head Gumashta	70–100
(5) Maddatgars: six to eight	20–40
(6) Munchis: six to eight	12–15
2. Munshi Department (Native Correspondence)	
(1) Head Jawabnavis or Munshi	70–85
(2) Assistant Jawabnavis: one or two	21–30
(3) Maddatgars: three or four	10–14
(4) Assistant Maddatgars: one or two	5–7
(5) Volunteers: no set amount	unpaid
3. English Department (Accounts and Correspondence)	
(1) Head English Accountant	100
(2) Head English Writer	70
(3) English Translator	70
(4) Deputy Accountant	60
(5) Deputy Writer	40
(6) Writers: five to seven	17–30
(7) Volunteers: no set amount	unpaid
4. Treasury Department	
(1) Cash Keeper	80–100
(2) Assistant Cash Keeper	28
(3) Head Shroff	40
(4) Assistant Shroff	14
(5) Gumashtas: two to three	10–20

	Monthly Scale
5. Record Office (Daftarkhana)	
(1) English Record Keeper (Daftardar)	35
(2) Native Record Keeper (Daftardar)	30
(3) Gumashtas: two	15–20
(4) Daftarbands: two	7–10
(5) Volunteer Assistants: two	unpaid
6. Sadarward Department (Material and Maintenance)	
(1) Jamadars: about three	10–20
(2) Peons: five or six	15
(3) Dhalaits (armed attendants): a dozen or more	6–15
(4) Muchis (book-binders, pen and paper providers doing odd jobs requiring manual skills): three	7–17
(5) Water Pandal Brahmans: two or three	9
(6) Inkmakers: two	7
(7) Mashalgars (light-keepers): about four	3
(8) Sweepers: four to five men, women, and boys	2
B. *Revenue Branch*	
1. Land Revenue Department	
(1) Peshkar	35
(2) English Writer	30
(3) Jawabnavis: two	25–30
(4) Maddatgars: eight	15–30
(5) Assistant Munshis: two	7
(6) Volunteers	unpaid
2. Salt Department	
(1) Peshkar	35
(2) English Writer	30
(3) Jawabnavis: two	25–30
(4) Maddatgars: two	20–30
3. Sayar (Inland Customs) Department	
(1) Peshkar	35
(2) Maddatgars: two	12–20
(3) Jawabnavis: two	10–15
4. Motarpha (House and Professions Tax) Department	
(1) Maddatgars: two	12–20
(2) Jawabnavis	10

	Monthly Scale
5. Abkari (Liquor and Drug Excise) Department	
(1) Maddatgars: two	12–20
(2) Jawabnavis: one or none	7–10
6. Sea Customs Department	
(1) Maddatgar	12–14
7. Stamp (Paper) Department	
(1) Maddatgar	12–14
8. Sundry Small Farms (Misc.) Department	
(1) Maddatgar	12
C. *Magistrate Branch*	
1. Secretariat Section	
(1) Manager	70
(2) English Writer	35
(3) Jawbnavis (Munshis): six or more	14–35
(4) Pakhali (Water-carrier)	12
(5) Inkmaker	5
(6) Mashalchi (Light Keeper)	4
2. Enforcement (Sibandi) Section	
(1) Sardar	20
(2) Hawaldars: two	10
(3) Naiks: two	7
(4) Peons: 30 to 40	5
3. Guard Section	
(1) Daffadar	10
(2) Dhalaits: 12 to 15	6–7
(3) Peons: 20 to 30	5
4. Jail Section	
(1) Jailer	14
(2) Lance Naik	7
(3) Peons: 23 to 34	5
5. Oath Administering Section and Legal Section	
(1) Brahman Sastry	10
(2) Mulla Koran	10
(3) Jangam	7

D. *General Branch*

Monthly Scale

This branch was still largely nebulous. As far as we know, only three departments were definitely organized, the rest being subject assigned to various Cutcherry personnel.

1. Maramat (Public Works) Department: Superintendents
2. District Post (Dak & Tappal) Department: Post Master
3. Health Department: Dressers, Vaccinators, Helpers

II. THE GHAIBATU ORGANIZATION

A. *Taluk-Thana Cutcherris*

Monthly Scale

Fourteen regular stations combined revenue, police and general functions; two were police stations only; and two were salt stations.

1. Tahsildari Branch

(1) Revenue Amin (With Police: Rs. 100–200)		Rs. 60–100
(2) Naib Amin	These three offices	30–50
(3) Sheristadar	could be rolled into	14–35
(4) Peshkar	one	20–30
(5) Head Maddatgar		12–17
(6) Maddatgars: two to three		10–12
(7) Jawabnavis: two to three		7–10
(8) Mashalgar (Mashalchi)		3
(9) Sweepers		2

2. Thanadari Branch

(1) Police Amin	40–100
(2) Maddatgar	10–12
(3) Jamadar	15–20
(4) Hawaldar	10
(5) Naik	7
(6) Peons: 30 or so	5
(7) Guard Daffadar	7
(8) Guard Peons: 30 or so	4

3. Salt Branch

(1) Salt Thanadar	40–60
(2) Peshkar	20–30

	Monthly Scale
(3) Gumashta	15–20
(4) Maddatgar	12–14
(5) Navisindas (Jawabnavis or Munchis): two	10–12
(6) Shroffs: two or more	10–14
(7) Measurers: two or more	5–7
(8) Daffadars: two or three	7–15
(9) Peons: 30 or so	5
(10) Mashalchi	3
(11) Kharimarrakkals ('carrymercals'): three annas	14
	2·5
(12) Salt Cutters: three or more	2·5
(13) Sweepers: two	2

B. *Samutu Chawadis and Sayar Chaukis*

1. The Establishment of a Samutu Chawadi (or Choultry): (105 units in Guntur)

(1) Samatdar	10–14
(2) Gumashta	7
(3) Paigasti (Overseer)	5
(4) Munshi	5
(5) Peons: two or three	4

2. The Establishment of a Sayar Chauki: (46 land and 2 sea units)

(1) Gumashta	8
(2) Peons: four to six at	4

III THE JUDICIAL ESTABLISHMENT

A. *The Zillah Court*

1. Civil Branch

(1) Sheristadar	100
(2) Nazir (Inspector)	45
(3) Record Keeper	35
(4) Head Gumashta	24
(5) Gumashtas: five or so	10–21
(6) Head Writer (English)	70
(7) Writers two or three	21–35
(8) Shroff	10

	Monthly Scale
(9) Munshi	7
(10) Head Messenger	10
(11) Messengers	5–7
(12) Masalchi (Light Keeper)	3
(13) Sweepers: two	2

2. Criminal Branch (There is over-lap between branches.)

(1) Record Keeper (also Interpreter)	30
(2) Jawabnavis	28
(3) Gumashta	18
(4) Translator	50

B. *The Subordinate (Auxiliary) Courts*

In 1846 :

1. Principal Sadr Amin (C. Venkata Ragavarcharlu)	500
2. Kazi or Mufti Amin (Haji Maulavi Muhammad Yakub Ali Sahib)	200

C. *The District Munsif's Courts*

1. First Class Munsifs	140
2. Second Class Munsifs	115
3. Third Class Munsifs	100

APPENDIX II

LIST OF ZILLAH COLLECTORS AND JUDGES[1]

A. *Collectors*

Nathaniel Webb	1791
George Andrew Ram	24 March 1794
William Gordon	25 January 1800
Peter Cherry	9 July 1800
Arthur G. Blake (in charge)	21 August 1800
Andrew Scott	10 September 1800
William Mainwaring (resigned)	9 August 1802
Mark Gilbert Hudson (in charge)	17 June 1803
Daniel Crawford	16 October 1803
Mark Hudson (in charge)	28 June 1805
Gordon Smith (died)	18 July 1805
Mark Hudson (in charge)	19 June 1807
Thomas Jarrett	22 August 1807
Francis W. Robertson	11 December 1809
Thomas Jarrett	11 April 1810
Francis Robertson	18 December 1810
Thomas Alexander Oakes	24 October 1811
George W. Saunders (in charge)	16 May 1814
Thomas Oakes	16 July 1814
St. John Thackeray (in charge)	16 July 1816
Thomas Oakes	10 November 1816
Joseph Clulow (in charge)	20 September 1821
John Clinton Whish	24 October 1821
Joseph Clulow (in charge)	23 June 1825
John Whish	27 August 1825
William Elphinstone Underwood (in charge)	13 January 1827
John Whish	22 January 1827
John Orr (in charge)	27 April 1827
John Whish	1 October 1828
Alexander F. Bruce	21 July 1831
William Mason	3 January 1832
Charles Philip Brown	21 December 1832

[1] Gordon Mackenzie, *A Manual of the Kistna District* (Madras, 1883), p. 350.

Charles Dumergue (in charge)	25 March 1833
John Blackburn	9 April 1833
Archibald S. Mathison (in charge)	25 December 1833
William Lavie	13 March 1834
Malcolm Lewin	12 June 1834
A. S. Mathison (in charge)	19 May 1835
William A. Neave	26 September 1835
Patrick Grant	1 November 1835
Archibald Mathison (in charge)	11 January 1836
Alexander Bruce	30 April 1836
James H. Bell (in charge)	10 October 1836
George A. Harris (in charge)	14 October 1836
Edward Binney Glass	11 November 1836
George Harris (in charge)	3 July 1837
John Goldingham	29 July 1837
Arthur Hathaway (in charge)	15 February 1842
Archibald Mathison	3 March 1842
Hudleston Stokes	22 April 1842
Arthur Hathaway (in charge)	24 November 1842
Hudleston Stokes	24 December 1842
Henry Newill (in charge)	19 August 1844
Walter Elliott Lockhart	16 September 1844
Daniel White	17 February 1845
Henry Newill (in charge)	11 October 1845
Hudleston Stokes	9 February 1846
Alexander G. Tweedie (in charge)	21 November 1849
Henry Newill (in charge)	23 November 1849
Hudleston Stokes	17 January 1850
Henry Newill (in charge)	13 August 1850
Hudleston Stokes	12 December 1850
Arthur Purvis (in charge)	13 March 1851
Hudleston Stokes	11 November 1852
Arthur Purvis	1 January 1853
Henry Wood	23 September 1854
James R. Gordon (in charge)	13 August 1855
Henry Newill	10 December 1855
Robert R. Cotton	3 August 1857
Henry Wood	23 November 1857
Charles G. Master (in charge)	2 November 1858
Henry Wood	2 December 1858
Charles Master (in charge)	7 May 1859
James W. B. Dykes	15 June 1859
Charles Master (in charge)	24 October 1859

B. *Judges*

Thomas Townsend	1802
John Byng	1806
George Travers	1815
Arthur Gregory	1816
Charles Woodcock	1818
(No Judge)	1820
Francis Robson	1828
(No Judge)	1831
Anthony Angelo (Assistant)	1832
Thomas Pendergast (Assistant)	1833
George Bird (Assistant)	1834
William Lavie (Assistant)	1834
Anthony Angelo (Assistant)	1835
Charles Oakes (Assistant)	1836
Henry Phillips (Assistant)	1836
Archibald Mathison (Assistant)	1836
Edward Glass (Assistant)	1837
Edward Newberry (Assistant)	1837
William Jellicoe (Assistant)	1839
George Beauchamp	1840
Edmund Story	1840
Henry Wood	1842
John Horsley	1843
Patrick Irvine	1849
James Hamilton Bell	1850
John Rohde	1851
Patrick Irvine	1854
Rowle Chatfield	1856
Thomas Onslow	1857

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Abkari (U.), *Abukari* (Tel.): Revenue derived from toddy, liquors, drugs, and &c.
Adalat (U.): A court of law.
Agraharam (Tel.): Village or part thereof held by Brahmans on a quit-rent or free of assessment.
Amani, *Amanee* (U.): 'Held in trust.' Lands or other sources of revenue held in trust under the direct management of Government.
Amil, *Amildar* (U.): A collector of revenue on the part of the Government. Also a farmer of or contractor for the revenue under the native system.
Amin, *Ameen* (A.): A police and/or revenue officer in charge of one thana or taluk. A Tahsildar.
Anchana (Tel.): An estimate or appraisement of probable amount and value of crops on a field.
Anna (U. & S.): The sixteenth part of anything, but commonly, of a rupee.
Arzi, Arji, Urzee, Arzee (A.): A petition; an address; a memorial; a respectful statement or representation whether oral or written.
Asara (Tel.): In Northern Circars, revenues paid in kind. *Asar-sistu*: fluctuating amount.
Badmash (U.): A bad character. A hooligan. A ruffian.
Bandabast (U.): The arrangements or agreements for any business or undertaking.
Batta, *Bhatta*, *Bhatyamu* (Mar. and Tel.): Additional or expense allowance (or per diem allowance) for extra service.
Bazar, *Bazaar* (P.): A market. A market place. A shopping centre.
Beriz, *Berij* (Mar.), *Beriju* (Tel.): A gross assessment, total sum, aggregate demand of revenue (same as *jama*). Usually applied to amount payable by a Zamindar.
Butadu (Tel.): Household expenses. A *butadu gumashta* was a private secretary and accountant belonging to the Zamindar.
Chaprassi (U.): A messenger or courier who wears a badge (*chapras*) of office.
Chauki (U.): A police, frontier, customs, guard or watching station of post.
Chaukidar (U.): An officer in charge of a chauki.
Chaukidari (U.): Of or pertaining to the office of a chauki.
Chawadi (Tel.): A public lodging place, a shelter for travellers (same as *choultry*).
Chenchuvardu (Tel.): A man of the Chenchu tribe (aboriginal).
Chittha, *Chittah* (Tel.): A memorandum, a rough note or account, rough journal or daybook.
Circar (P.): Government, organization, administration, or district. See *Sarkar*.

[1] *Note:* Key to abbreviations within brackets as follows:

(A.) Arabic
(U.) Urdu and/or Hindustani
(P.) Persian
(S.) Sanskrit
(Tel.) Telugu
(Mar.) Marathi

Cutcherry: See Kacheri. *Kacheri* (Mar.), *Kachahri* (U.), *Cutcherry*: A court, a hall, an office, the place where any public business is transacted.

Dabbu (Tel.): Money in general. A quantity of *dabs* (*dubs*). A copper dub is valued at 20 *kasu*.

Dacoity: Gang robbery.

Dafadar (U.), *Daphedarudu* (Tel.): A police officer.

Daftar, *Daftur* (U. and P.), *Daphtaramu* (Gel.), *Daphtar* (Mar.): A record, account, official statement, report, archives.

Daftardar: Record Keeper. *Daftarband*: Guard of Record Office.

Daftarkhana: Record Office.

Daftram, *Daphtaramu* (Tal.): A public document or record of a district or office.

Dak (Mar.): Post. post-office, or establishment for conveying letters and/or travellers. Relays along the road for this purpose.

Dar (P.): A holder. One who possesses. Usually a suffix. A *Zamindar* is a land-holder. A *Nadar* is a person who holds nothing.

Darbar, *Durbar* (U.): A court, a royal court, an audience or levee.

Darbari: Of or belonging to a darbar.

Darbari-Kharch: Expenses of a darbar.

Darkhast, *Dhurkast*, *Durgast*, *Dirgast* (U. and Tel.): A contract; a tender; a representation; an application; a petition. In Madras, an application to land rent; a tender.

Darogha (U.): A superintendent or overseer. A manager, especially of a police or customs station.

Dasabhandamu (Tel.): A deduction of revenue in compensation for improvements in irrigation wells, tanks, canals, etc.

Daskhat (U. and P.): Handwriting, signature.

Dast, *Dust* (U. and P.), *Dastu* (Tel.): lit., 'The Hand'. The portion of revenue actually realized by some head man, but not paid to the government.

Dastak (U. and P.): A hand signature. A passport, a permit. A free transit permit. A summons, a writ, or a warrant. Especially a process served on a defaulter to compel payment.

Dastur, *Dastoor* (Mar.): Handwriting, signature, the signature of a clerk or amenuensis. The form of an official paper.

Daul, *Dowle* (Mar.), *Davulu*, *Daulu* (Tel.): Mode, manner, shape appearance, form, estimate, valuation. A statement of particulars of gross revenue levied from an estate or district. An estimate of amount which estate should yield.

Daul-band-o-bast: Detailed estimate.

Daul-nama: Extract from detailed estimate.

Desastha (Mar.): One of a tribe of Maratha Brahmans who consider themselves superior. A secular Brahman. In the south, a Maratha Brahman in general.

Desmukh (Mar.), *Desmook*, *Deshmukh*: Hereditary officer exercising supreme police and revenue authority over a district.

Despandi, *Deshpandi*, *Despondi* (Mar.): Hereditary revenue accountant of a district.

Dhalait (U.): An armed attendant or peon. (From *dhal*: 'shield'.)

Dhobi: A washerman. One who washes clothes.

Diwali, *Divali*, *Deepavali*: Hindu festival of lights. Occurs in late October.

Diwan, *Dewan* (P.): A minister; a chief officer; and/or a financial and revenue chief minister.

Dora (Tel.): A master, a ruler, a prince, a European. Honorific title: *Doragaru*.

Dubash, *Dubashi*, *Dubasi* (Tel.): An interpreter. An Indian in the service of a European. A person who speaks two languages (*do-bashi*).

Dumbala (Tel.): An order for giving up the government share of produce to the cultivators.

Ennadi, Yennadi: A caste of the jungles known for their skill in crime.
Erukala, Yerukala: A caste of the jungles and hills. Aboriginal gypsies having skill in hunting, crime, and in fortune-telling.
Fasli (U.): The harvest year—a mode of computing time in India from July 1st. By adding 590 to the Fasli year, one may gain a rough calculation of the year Anno Domini
Faujdar (U. and A.): Army Officer (Fauj: army or military: *dar*: keeper, holder, or official). He was often given charge of all military-criminal matters in a district.
Garisa, Garce (Tel.): A measure of grain equal to 400 markals. 185·2 cubic feet. 9860 lb. avoirdupois.
Ghaibat, Ghaibatu (Tel.): Hidden, concealed, missing lost. Extra. Distant—as an outstation. The opposite of *huzur*. Any office in the field.
Godown: A warehouse.
Grama, Gram (Tel. and S.): Village. Of or pertaining to a village. *Grama-Kharch*: Village Expenses.
Gurdi (Tel.): A place of worship. A temple.
Gurdikattu (Tel.): An equivalent to a village Domesday Book giving details of village boundaries and measuring all lands, burial and burning grounds, topes and wells.
Gumashta, Gomasta, Gumasta, Goomastah (U. and P.): An agent, a steward, a representative; an officer employed by a Zemindar to collect rents. In Madras, a native accountant in the Revenue Department; an agent or subordinate clerk, or accountant.
Havali, Haveli, Hawali (Tel. and A.): Household lands. *Khas* lands. Lands under direct government management for government needs.
Hawaladar, Hawaldar, Havildar (U.): A chief of a company of guards, guides, messengers: a police officer; a native officer of the Indian Army.
Hukum (Mar.), *Hukm* (A.): An order, a command.
Huk-nama, Hukm-nama: A written order or command. A written award or judgement.
Hundi (U.): A bill of exchange.
Huzur (U. and A.), *Hujur* (Mar.), *Hujara* (Tel.): The presence; the royal presence; the presence of superior authority such as a Judge or a Collector. Also, the place where he resides, the hall, the office, the court. Abstractly, the state, the government.
Inam (A.), *Inamu* (Tel.): Land which is free from revenue. There are many kinds: A *maniam* is for a village servant. A *savaram* is for a revenue officer or zamindar. An *agraharam* or *shrotriam* is an *inam* village for Brahmans. A *devadasi inam* is for religious prostitution. There are numerous other varieties for religion, arts, crafts, favours, &c.
Ijara (Mar.): A contract. A farm or lease of the revenue of a village or a district. Price, profit; a lease or farm of land at a defined rent or revenue, whether from government direct or from an intermediate payer. Also spelled *Izara*.
Ijaradaru: A renter. A farmer of public revenue.
Itlak-navis (U.): Summons-writer.
Itlak-kharaj (U.): Full subsistence.
Izhar (A.): Making manifest, publishing, a deposition or declaration in court, an affidavit.
Izhar-navis: A writer of depositions, and officer of the court.
Jama (A.): A 'gathering' or 'collecting'. Amount, aggregate, total,—as applied especially to debit or receipt side of an account and the rental of an estate. Also total amount of rent or revenue payable by a cultivator or Zamindar

including all cesses, as well as land tax; sometimes only revenue on land. Usually compounded with another term.

Jamabandi (U.): The annual settlement made under the ryotwar system.

Jamadar, Jemadar (U.): The chief or leader of any number of persons; military subaltern, second to Subhadar; an officer of police, customs, &c., usually second in command.

Jarib, Jareeb (U. and A.): Special resources to support ryots in time of calamity. *Jarib* lands are special Circar lands used to support ryots in time of calamity.

Jodi (Tel.): Land assessed at half-rates—for temples or in consideration of service. An easy or quit-rent. A personal tax on district officers.

Jodi-inam: A grant of land held on quit-rent.

Kabuliat, Cabooleat (U. and A.): A written agreement; a counterpart of a revenue lease; deed. 'A written agreement, especially one signifying assent as the counterpart of a revenue lease . . . or the document in which a payer of revenue whether to Government or to Zemindar or to Farmer, expresses his consent to pay the amount assessed.' A written contract—the counterpart of a revenue lease or a license.

Kachcha (U.): Crude, raw, rough. The opposite of *pakka*.

Kacheri (Mar.), *Kachahri* (U.), *Cutcherry*: A court, a hall, an office, the place where any public business is transacted.

Kaifayat, Kyfeeyut (U.): Statement, description, deposition, report, account of particulars, story. Any authenticated document or voucher.

Kail, Kailu, Kayalu (Tel.): A heap. The actual measure of a crop after it is threshed and before its division between the cultivator and government.

Kaildar, Kailudaru, Kyledar: A weighman or measurer. A superintendent of the measurement of the crop.

Kamatamu, Kamatam (Tel.): The cultivation which the cultivator carries on with his own stock but with the labour of another. The land which the Zamindar, Jagirdar, or Inamdar keeps in his own hands, cultivating it by labourers, in distinction to that which he lets out in farm.

Kamma (Tel.): A high caste (Sudra) in Telugu country. This caste sometimes claims to be higher than Sudra by virtue of their martial history.

Kapu (Tel.): A caste in Telugu country which is high, combining cultivating and martial traditions. A high caste (Sudra.) A Reddi. Often the Head Ryot of a village.

Karnam, Karanamu, Curnum (Tel.): A village accountant. A chief officer and leader of a village by heredity. Almost always a Brahman and usually a Niyogi Brahman.

Kasu, Cash (Tel.): A small copper coin, current at Madras, made equal in 1832 to the Calcutta and Madras *paisa* and rated at 64 to the rupee (4 to the anna). It was formerly rated at 80 to the *fanam*, a small silver coin.

Kasba (A.), *Casuba* (Tel.): A small town or large village, the chief or market town of a district.

Kat-kata (U.): Cutting and thrashing fees (chippings, cuttings, scraps).

Kaul, Kowle, Cowle, Kavulu (Tel.): A word, a promise, an agreement.

Kaul-nama: A written voucher granted to the revenue payers specifying terms. A contract. *Kararnama*: A written contract or engagement.

Kavadi (Tel.): A pole for balancing burdens on the shoulder with a rope at each end from which burdens are slung.

Kazi: A Muslim Judge. An authority of Muslim law.

Khalisa, Khalsa (U.): Exchequer or treasury.

Kham (U. and P.): Raw, unripe, crude, gross. Gross as distinguished from net, in revenue. Opposite of *Khas*.

Khana (U. and P.): A house, a dwelling, a place.
Khandi (Mar.): A measure of weight and capacity, commonly termed Candy. In Madras, it is 20 maunds or 500 pounds.
Kharaj (U.): A tax. A tribute, particularly on infidels. *Khiraji-bhumi* (Tel.): Land tax.
Kharch, Khurch (U.), *Karchu, Curchoo* (Tel.): Expense, disbursement, outgoings. Debit. *Grama Kharchu* is the expense of keeping a village levied upon cultivators.
Khas (A.): Select, eminent noble; also private, peculiar.
Kist, Kistu, Sistu (Tel.): Instalment, portion; the amount paid as an instalment to government and the period fixed for its payment. As a revenue term it denotes the portion of the annual assessment paid at specified periods in the course of the year.
Komarti, Komati (Tel.): A caste in South India who consider themselves to be pure Vaisya. Hence, they are shopkeepers, merchants, bankers, &c.
Koru (Tel.): A part, a share; as a revenue term it applies to the share of the crop which belongs to the cultivator.
Kostugutta (Tel.): The joint renting of a village by all of the cultivators.
Kotharu, Cotauru (Tel.): A salt pan, a salt works.
Kotwal: The chief of police in a town.
Kuchela, Coochala (Tel.): Telugu for 'a heap of cut corn': a measure of land in the Northern Circars . . . equal to 8 Gorrus or 100 *Kuntas*. (40 Kuntas make an acre.)
Kulwar (U.): Each—tribe, caste, family, &c.
Kunta (Tel.): A Telugu measure of land equal to 1089 square feet. 32 Kuntas or 19,600 square feet make a *Katti*. A *Katti* is equal to 14 acres.
Kuppa (Tel.): A heap or stack of grain. *Kuppa-anchana*: an estimate of grain. *Kuppa-jabita*: list of grain stacks by owners.
Lambardi, Lumbardi, Lambadi (Tel.): One of a migratory community of traders. A gypsy. A *Banjara*. They deal in salt and grain. They operate as transporters. They have fame for knowing how to steal with skill.
Lungarkhana: A hospital, a place for the sick.
Maddatgar, Madadgar (U. and Mar.): Helper, assistant, clerk or writer.
Madiga (Tel.): An outcaste leather worker.
Mahal (U. and A.): A place, a house, an apartment, a station. A province, or district, a department. A division of a taluk or district yielding revenue. An estate or any parcel or parcels of land which can be separately assessed with the public revenue.
Mahsul (U. and A.): Collected, levied, revenue, public income from any source . . . as land, customs, excise, &c. The produce or return on anything.
Mahasulu (Tel.): Produce of land; the harvest, the crop.
Mahasulu-darudu (Tel.): Officer employed to secretly to remove crop before revenue is paid.
Mahsuldar (Tel.): Yielding or having profit: a collector or receiver of taxes.
Mahtadi (U.), *Mohtadu, Motadu* (Tel.): A Head Village peon or watchman. A village messenger or peon employed on errands. An inferior revenue servant.
Mahzar-nama (P.): A written collective attestation, a roll, a joint petition from a village.
Majumdar, Mazumdar, Majmudar (Mar. and Tel.): Hereditary auditor and registrar of a district. He kept a check on government revenue and expenditure.
Makta, Mucta (Tel.): A fixed rate or rent.
Makhta-shistu (Tel.): Fixed rent.
Maktakaulu (Tel.): An agreement for annual quit-rent.

Mala (Tel.): The Telugu equivalent of the outcast, Pariah. Malas and Madigas are the large outcaste communities between which there is a deep enmity.

Mamul, Mamool: Established custom. Tradition. What is done.

Man, Mancha (Tel.): A measure of capacity equal to one *patha* and a half *seer* (or 2½ *seers*). Sixteen *manchas* make a tumu or *maund*.

Manauti (U.): Bail, security, surety. Especially becoming a surety for payment of revenue.

Manavari, Manawary (Tel.): Rice crop depending solely on rain . . . not irrigated.

Maniam, Manyam, Mannium (Tel.): Land held free of assessment by village servants as emoluments for service.

Mannavar (Mar.): Hereditary officer having police authority over a district.

Mantra, Mantram, Mantramu (S. and Tel.): A prayer. A mystical incantation. A magical formula. A means of invoking evil or harm.

Marakal, Markal, Mercel, Marrakkal (Tel.): A measure of grain equal to 12 *seers* or 8 *padis*. 12 *markals* make a *kalam* and 400 *marakals* make a *garisa*. As of 20 October 1846.

Maramat (U. and A.): Public Works. Expenditure on Public Works.

Marammatu-Zabita (Tel.): Account of particulars of cost of repairing roads, tanks, other public works.

Mashal (A.): A lamp, lanthorn, torch.

Mashalchi (U.), *Mashalgar* (Tel.): Torch or lamp bearer. A domestic servant under superior table servants for cleaning plates, dishes.

Mashatudaru (Tel.): A measurer of land, a surveyor.

Maund (U.), *Manugu* (Tel.): A measure of weight of general use in India. The South Indian *maund* was fixed at 25 pounds. A *maund* was the same as a *tumu* and was equal to 16 *manchas*, 20 *pathas* or 40 *seers*. 20 maunds made a *khandi* (500 lb.).

Milkiat-istemari (U.): Possession in perpetuity. 'Proprietary Right.'

Mirasu (Tel.): Inheritance. Inherited right to a share of the produce of village lands or inherited right to perquisites of a village office, such as Karnam. A *Mirasi* is an hereditary right.

Mirasidarudu: A holder of hereditary rights or offices. In the Northern Circars, especially, a hereditary village officer.

Modi, Mod, Mor (Mar. and Tel.): lit., 'to break or separate'. The common business hand; the broken or cursive writing used by Marathas on ordinary occasions.

Monigar (Tamil and Tel.), *Maniyakaran* or *Maniyadadu*: The Headman of a village In Telugu country he is usually called by his caste name, i.e. *Pedda Kapu* (Big Kapu), *Pedda Raju*, &c. Later, the Headman was called the *Munsif*.

Moplah, Mappilla: A native of Malabar who is descended from the Arabs.

Motarpha, Motarpha (Tel.), *Mutarafa* (A.): A tax or taxes levied on trades and professions, on village artificers, as on weavers' looms, shops, stalls, and sometimes upon houses. It is properly a poll-tax.

Mua-in (A.): Established. Fixed.

Muainzabita, Muain-zabita: Established rule. Table of wages or allowance. List of public servants of any establishment. Fixed or legal charges.

Muchchi (Tel.): The name of a caste in south India or a member of it who is a worker in leather and saddlery, but is also a cabinet or furniture-maker and a portrait painter.

Muchche-vardu, Much-man (Tel.): Employed in public offices to make pens, provide paper, seal letters, and bind books, &c.

Mufassal (A.): 'Separate.' 'Distinct.' 'Particular.' The country, the provinces, the outstations. The opposite of *Sadr*.

Mufti (A.): A Mohammaden law-officer whose duty was to expound the law which the *Kazi* was to execute. The latter in British India usually discharges the duties of the *Mufti* also.

Muharrir (U. and P.): A clerk, a scribe, a writer.

Munshi (U and A.): A writer, a secretary. Applied by Europeans usually to teachers of Vernacular languages.

Munsif (U. and A.), *Moonsiff*: An Indian civil judge. Village Munsif. District Munsif. Principal Sadr Amin. The Village Munsif in Guntur was Headman of the village and was known as the 'Munsif'.

Muttha, *Mutah*, *Mootah* (Tel.): The sub-division of a district; in the Northern Sirkars a large estate including several villages and corresponding with a zamindari in Hindustan. An inconsiderable Zamindar. A division of a large zamindari.

Mutthadar, *Mutahdar*: Headman of a village or group of villages; a small-scale zamindar.

Naib (A.): A deputy, a representative, a lieutenant, a viceroy. Examples: *Naib-Sheristadar*, *Naib-Amin*, Sub-(*Naib*) Collector.

Naidu, *Nayudu* (Tel.): The title or surname used by a Kamma, a high-caste Sudra. Traditionally warriors and cultivators.

Nanja (Tel.): Wet ground or soil, especially for rice cultivation. The opposite of *Punja* or dry.

Navis, *Navisinda*, *Nis* (U. and P.): A writer, a clerk, a secretary, a transcriber. *Khush-navis*: a good writer, a professional. *Jawab-navis*: a writer of answers to petitions. *Wasil-bahi-navis*: a writer of accounts, receipts.

Nayaka (S.), *Naik*: A leader, a chief in general. The head of a small body of soldiers. A corporal in the Anglo-Indian army.

Nayak-vardu (Tel. and Mar.): Village police officer. Petty officer in police station of ten to fifteen men.

Nazir (A.): An inspector, a supervisor. An officer of the court charged with serving summons or taking depositions or making enquiries.

Nazr, *Nazar*, *Najar* (U.), *Najaru*, *Nazrana*, *Nazranalu* (Tel.), *Nuzoor*, *Nuzzur*: A gift, a present, an offering, especially one from inferior to a superior, a holy man, a prince.

Niyogi (Tel.): A Telugu secular Brahman similar to the Maratha Desastha. Taken from 'Niyoga' (Sanskrit) which means 'an appointment, a delegated duty or office', it covers many of the Brahmans in Government Service. He is the opposite of Vaidiki, although Vaidikis now are also entering Government Service. To call a person an 'Aruvelu-Niyogi' is to call him sly and cunning.

Pagoda: Hindu Temple. Also, the gold coin formerly coined at Madras . . . from its having the device of a temple on its face . . . but called *Hun* and *Varaha* by natives. The star-pagoda of Madras was valued at 45 fanams or roughly three and a half rupees.

Paigasti (Tel.): A superintendent or overseer.

Paisa, *Pice* (U. and Mar.): A copper coin valued at 4 to the anna and 64 to the rupee.

Pakhali, Puckally (U.): A water-carrier.

Pakka (S.): Ripe, mature, cooked, dressed, correct, exact, complete, perfect, substantial. Opposite of *Kachcha*.

Palem (Tel.): A residential area of a town or village for the outcaste communities, usually segregated and often outside of a village.

Paleru (Tel.), *Palalu*: A hired cultivator or labourer working with equipment not his own. A serf. An agricultural slave attached hereditarily to the land.

Palki: A palanquin or palankeen.

Panam, Fanam (S.): A unit of money. A small silver or gold coin (called *fanam* by Europeans). The gold coin was one-sixteenth of a *Hun* (*Pagoda*). The silver coin minted by the Company was equal to 80 *Kasu*, at 12 *fanams* 60 *kasu* to an Arcot rupee, and at 45 fanams to a star-pagoda.

Panchala (S.): An aggregate of five. In South India it denoted five castes:

(1) goldsmith		(1) carpenter
(2) carpenter		(2) weaver
(3) blacksmith	or	(3) barber
(4) brazier		(4) washerman
(5) worker in stone		(5) shoemaker

Panchaman: Outcaste . . . fifth caste. *Pareya* or *Pariah*.

Panchayat, Panchayet: A council. A village council. A caste council. A family council. A council of leaders, traditionally five in number, convened to decide on any question.

Pandal (Tel.): A temporary, porch-like structure (awning) for sheltering dignitaries on ceremonial occasions. Any shed.

Pandra-Raddu (Tel.): Samatdar's semi-monthly report on crops.

Paraiyan, commonly *Pariah* (Tamil): A man of low caste, an outcaste, a menial. One whose duty is to beat the village drum. Scavenger, messenger.

Parakhai (Tel.): Inspection, investigation, verification, assay, analysis, trial, by ordeal.

Patta (Tel.): A deed or lease . . . given by a receiver of revenue to a tenant . . . specifying conditions of tenure and the value of proportion of produce to be paid.

Payakari, Paikari (Tel.): A cultivator of lands in a village where he is not resident. A stranger. A migrant. A non-resident.

Peon: Commonly used by Europeans for Hindustani *Piada*. A footman, a foot-soldier, an inferior officer of police or customs or courts of justice, usually wearing a badge and armed with a lance or sword and shield. A kind of local militia. A running footman, courier, messenger (Markara).

Peshcar, Peshkar, Peishcar (U.): An agent, a deputy, a servant (Peish: 'in front of') . . . someone who stands before or below someone else.

Peshkash, Peshkush (U.): Tax, tribute. lit., 'what is first drawn'. First fruits. In Madras, revenue exacted from the great Zamindars in the Northern Sarkars and from the Poligars of the South.

Phansigar (U.): A strangler, a robber and murderer who strangled his victims by throwing a turban of cloth around their necks when off their guard; the same as a *Thag* or *Thug*, *Phans*, *Phansa*, *Phansi*, *Phas*, *Phasi*: a snare, noose, halter.

Pie: A small copper coin. The smallest part of a rupee rated at 3 pies to a pice, 4 pice to an anna, and 16 annas to a rupee. A pie is the twelfth part of an anna.

Puja (S.): Worship. Religious ceremony. Invoking magic. *Pujari* is a priest of a temple or a person who is engaged in *puja*.

Pullari, Poolary (Tel.): A tax on grazing land.

Punja (Tel.): Dry ground or soil, especially for millet crops.

Punkah: A fan. A large fan hanging from a suspended beam which is pulled back and forth across a room.

Purohit (S. and Tel.): A village, caste, or family priest. An astrologer or soothsayer, who sets auspicious days.

Putti (Tel.), *Pooty, Poottie*: A measure of capacity equal to twenty *Tums*. The same as a *khandi*.

Raj (S.): A kingdom, a state, a principality, a régime.

Raju (Tel.): A high caste of Telugu cultivators claiming to be *Kshatriya* (the second or military-regal caste).

Rasm (A.) *Rusum*, *Russoom*: Customary fees, perquisites, gratitudes, commissions.

Rawana (U. and P.): A passport, pass.

Rayudu, *Raidu*: The title or surname of a Velama, or highcaste Sudra.

Reddi (Tel.): The name of a principal caste of Telugu cultivators having a martial tradition. This high caste community predominates in Palnad, Rayalusima, and Telengana.

Rupiya, *Rupee* (S.-rupya): A silver coin. The general currency of India. Remodelled in 1835, the Company's rupee was given a standard weight and fineness with English inscriptions and the head of the British sovereign. The older Arcot rupee was almost the same value as the Company rupee. The rupee was valued at roughly two shillings or about three and a half rupees to a pagoda. It was divided into 16 *annas*, with 12 *pies* to the *anna*.

Ryot, *Raiyat* (A.), *Rayutu* (Tel.): A subject, a cultivator, a peasant. This term is confusing because: (1) it does not distinguish between the highcaste cultivator, the wealthy leader and member of a village elite and the indigent cultivator who may be a bondsman; (2) its similarity to *rayadu* or *rayalu* or *rayudu* (prince, leader, or highcaste) have led to its being confused and identified with village leaders, and with serfs.

Ryotwari: A revenue system in which, theoretically, an agreement is made between government officers and each individual cultivator actually tilling the soil once a year for a money tax.

Sabnavis, *Sabnis* (Mar.): 'All Writer.' Secretary.

Sadr, *Sudr* (U.): Chief, supreme, central. Opposite of mufassal.

Sadrwarid (P.), *Sadaravarudu* (Tel.), *Sadarward*: Charges for equipment in a government office, such as ink, paper, oil, repairs and the like.

Samasthanamu (Tel.): Hereditary (Ancient) Hindu fief.

Samat, *Samutu*, *Samoot* (Tel.): A subdivision of a district. Formerly more the size of a taluk, it is now known as a *firka*. Under Hindu rule, a *samutu* was a division of a *sima*.

Samatdar, *Samutdar*, *Samutudar* (Tel.): A subdivisional officer. An officer having charge of a *samutu*. This officer is now called a Revenue Inspector.

Sar (P.): Head, chief, principal. Often a prefix.

Sarkar, *Circar* (P.), *Sararu* (Tel.): The State, the Government, Supreme Authority. The Organization, the administration, the management, the department, the province. The 'Northern Circars' were a province comprised of district administrations.

Sar-rishta (P.): 'Chief connection, thread, line, or relation.' That which binds. A record, register, office, employment, or account. From Rishtadar: kinsman. The root for Sherista, Sheristakhana, Sheristadar, &c.

Sarva (Tel.): All, entire, whole. Tax on everything.

Sat-Sudra: "Clean" or highcaste *Sudras* (ostensibly the fourth or lowest *varna*). In South India, rulers have come from such castes.

Satani: A caste of Vaishnavite Sudras living chiefly on alms and music.

Saukar, *Sahukar* (U. and Mar.): Banker, dealer in money, money lender.

Savaramu (Tel.): Zamindari lands.

Sawari (U.): Horsemen.

Sayaru (Tel.), *Sair* (P.): The remaining or all other sources of revenue in addition to the land tax. All extra revenues above the land revenue (*mahasulu*). Under the British, the meaning was also narrowed to apply to internal and frontier transit duties.

Seer: A measure of weight varying in different parts of India. A fortieth of a *maund*.

Seri (Tel.): Land cultivated by Ryots paying revenue directly to the State. Small estates privately held by prosperous cultivators.

Sharakhatu (Tel.): Partnership, coparcenary, joint occupancy.

Shastri (S.): An authority and an expounder of Hindu law.

Sheristadar: Chief Secretary of a District Collector. The highest ranking Indian official in a district. The ministerial and managerial head of the Huzur Kacheri or Cutcherry. See: *Sar-rishta.*

Sheristakhana: lit., 'Chief connecting place'. Central Office. Secretariat. Accounts Department.

Shroff (U.): A money-changer or banker.

Shrotriam (Tel.): Land or village given to learned Brahman or to an Indian public servant as a reward in recognition of the same.

Sibandi, Sibbandi (Tel.): Irregular troups and/or police.

Sima, Seema (Tel.): The ancient term for district. Guntur District was once the Kondavidu *Sima.* Thus, in modern times, the Ceded Districts have been known as the *Rayalusima* or Chieftains' districts.

Sunni: the more orthodox of the two major divisions of Islam, as opposed to the *Shia.*

Tahsil (A.): Collection. Revenue collected from land. Revenue from a group of villages. Connoting a sheaf of village accounts from which revenues are determined.

Tahsildar: Chief revenue and police officer of a division of a district called a taluk. A subordinate Indian Collector. An officer subordinate to a *Talukdar* or District Collector (in Hyderabad).

Takavi (U.): Advance of money from Government for seed or on account of calamity.

Takid (A.): An order (Madras). Reminder. An injunction. An order from a superior to an inferior officer enjoining strict observance.

Taksim, Tukseem (U. and A.), *Takisamu* (Tel.): An extra contribution taken from villagers. An apportioning of an improper subscription among the inhabitants of a village. An extra appropriation.

Talari, Taliari, Tullary (Tel.): A village watchman.

Taluk: A subdivision of a district. One of the divisions under the administration of a Talukdar. In the Nizam's dominions, a magistrate or revenue officer over a district (or Sarkar) of Taluks is a Talukdav.

Tank: A reservoir for water. An artificial (at times natural) lake.

Tappal, Tappalu (Tel.): Mail, Post. The carriage and delivery of letters. The stage. A halting place (*Tappa*).

Tappalkhana: Post office.

Taram, Taramu (Tel.): Sort, kind, class. Especially applied to designate different kinds of village lands . . . under village accounts.

Taramdarudu, Taramdar: An assessor, surveyor, classifier of land.

Telaga: A relatively small but high caste of Telugu Sudras with a tradition of military and police employment. They are also, of course, cultivators.

Thag, Thug: See *Phansigar.*

Topu (Tel.), Tope: A grove of trees.

Tumu (Tel.): A measure of capacity, varying in value but always one twentieth of a *khandi.* The same as a *maund* and equal to 40 *seers*, 20 *pathas*, or 16 *manchas.*

Umedwar (U.): An unemployed person seeking work.

Uppu (Tel.): Salt.

Vaidiki: Religious Brahmans as distinguished from Niyogi or official (secular) Brahmans. During the past fifty years, this caste has given more and more competition to the Niyogis, for places in government service.

Vandra, Wandra (Tel.): Land granted at an easy rate of assessment to privileged castes or families of a village. Regular and customary remissions and privileges to highcaste communities.

Velama: A relatively small, highcaste community of (Sudra) cultivators which has traditionally contributed to government service, particularly under Hindu rule.

Visabadi (Tel.): A village where revenues are divided amongst the principal sharers, the proportions being fixed by land, so that a distinct portion of gross revenue is fixed on every field or lot of land. A Visabadi Settlement: settlement by field and individual cultivator is the same as Ryotwari settlement.

Vyapari: A caste of officers who came to Guntur from Golconda, claiming to be Brahmans. They are still known as Golconda Vyapari. Though their name would imply a Vaisya origin (*Vyapara*: business, affairs, profession), they do inter-marry with Desastha Brahmans.

Wakil, Vakil, Vakeel (A.): An agent or attorney. A court pleader. A representative. Among Marathas, the hereditary assistant of a *Desmukh*.

Wasul (Mar.): Collections, revenue, rent, etc. Money annually received (realized) by government proprietors, or bankers.

Wasulbaki (Mar.): Collection and application. The administration of the revenues.

Wasuldar: A collector of revenue.

Wasulwasul: Revenue, rent, collection, and management.

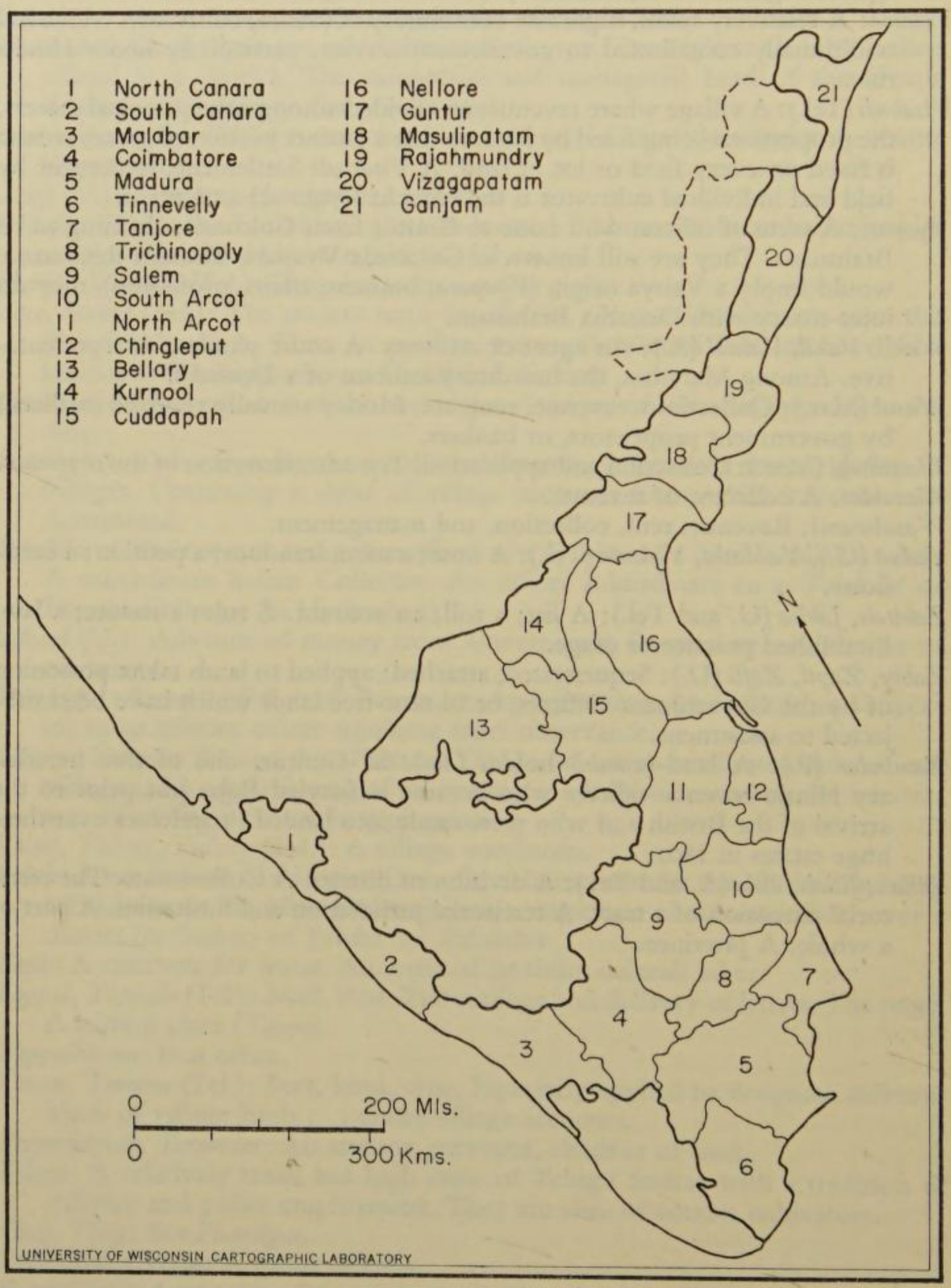
Yadast (U.), *Yaddasht, Yadastu* (Tel.): A note; a memorandum; a petition; a certificate.

Zabitah, Jabita (U. and Tel.): A list; a roll; an account. A rule; a statute; a law. Established practice or usage.

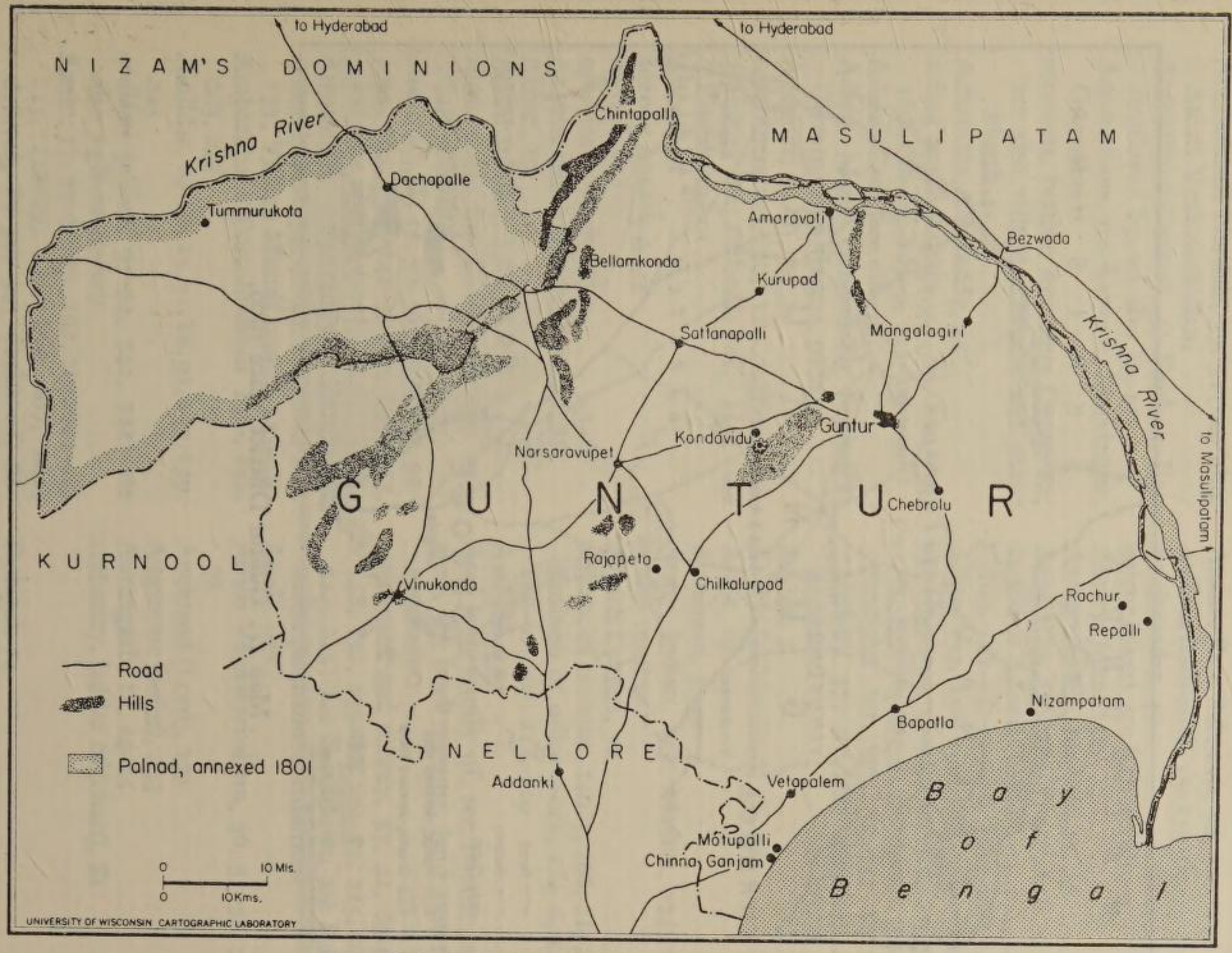
Zabty, Zapti, Zafti (U.): Sequestrated, attached; applied to lands taken possession of by the Government Officers, or to rent-free lands which have been subjected to assessment.

Zamindar (P.): A land-(*zamin*) holder (*dar*). In Guntur, one of five hereditary Hindu revenue officers who became self-styled Rajas just prior to the arrival of the British and who were made into landed Proprietors over their huge estates in 1802.

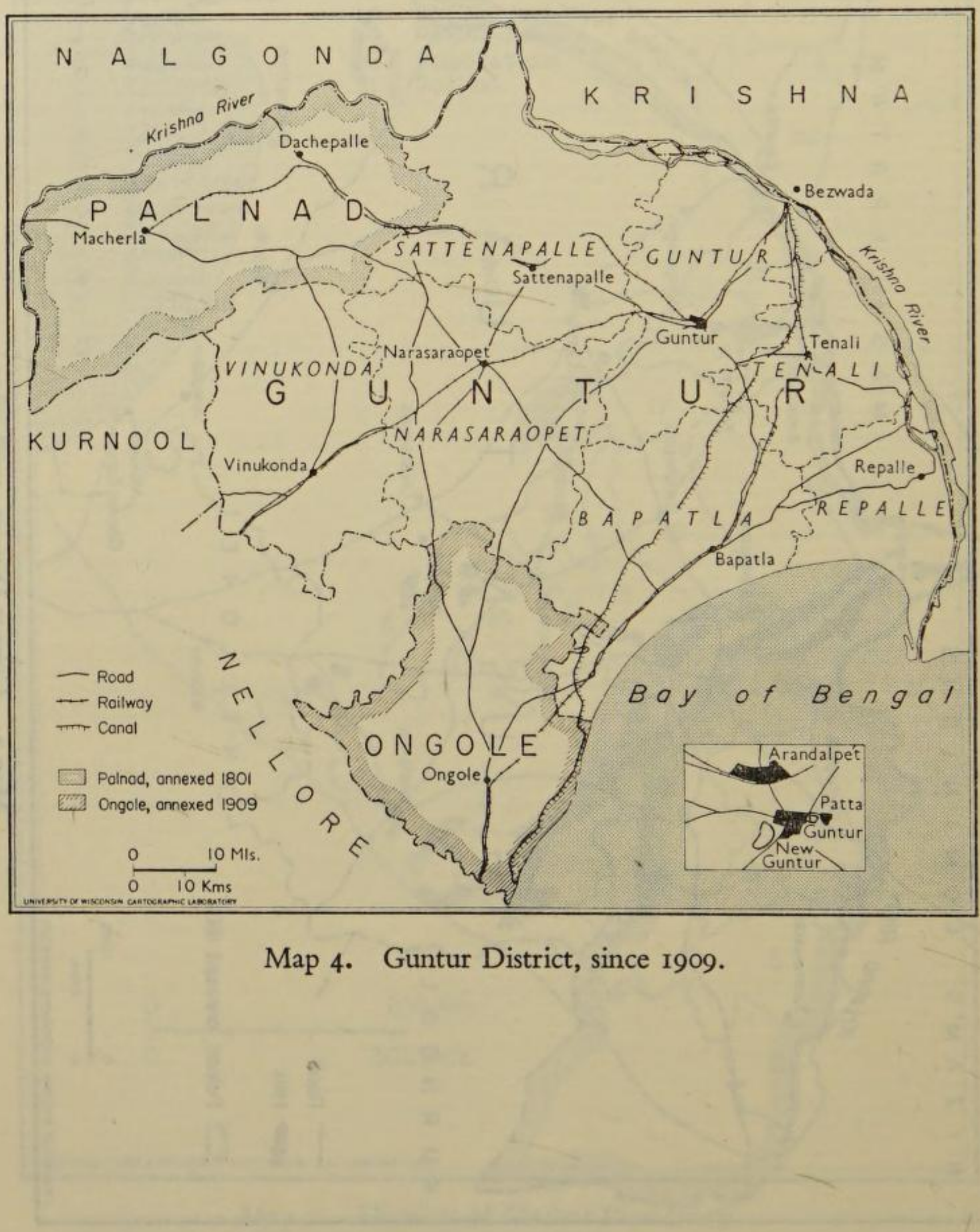
Zillah, Jillah, Zila (A. and Tel.): A division or district. A Collectorate. The territorial extension of a tract. A territorial jurisdiction and limitation. A part of a whole. A province.



Map 2. Districts of Madras Presidency.



Map 3. Guntur District, 1788–1859.



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